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Drugs link to Labour inquiry

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Friends of Gordon McMaster, the Paisley South MP who committed suicide last month, warned last night that the inquiry into the circumstances surrounding his death would be a "whitewash" unless it was widened to include Labour links with drug gangs in Glasgow.

The bill inside the Labour Party in Scotland began to spill out as Nick Brown, the Government Chief Whip, prepared to go north to begin interviewing some of those accused in Mr McMaster's suicide note of mounting a "whispering campaign" against him.

The Scottish Nationalist Party's chief executive, Mike Russell, said a Renfrewshire SNP councillor had been suspended for allegedly joining in the whispering campaign against Mr McMaster. But Mr Russell said Labour in Scotland was "being run as a one-party state". There was no suggestion that two MPs, Lord Dixon or Tommy Graham, named in the note, were implicated in the wider allegations.

Downing Street sources said it was hoped that the Chief Whip would have his report on the Prime Minister's desk in time for Tony Blair's return from holiday in 10 days' time.

But those who knew Mr McMaster said it would be a "whitewash" unless it probed the depths of the party in Scotland. "It could take years for the truth to come out," said one Labour MP. The pressure could force Mr Brown to recommend a full police investigation.

Government sources said there would be no fatal accident inquiry. Mr Blair was sent a copy of the suicide note in a dying request by Mr McMaster with a plea for it to be published, but it was passed to Mr Brown and there are no plans by ministers to bring it into the public domain.

The allegations could prove highly damaging for Labour in Scotland in the run-up to the referendum for an elected Scottish assembly, and the backbiting has intensified.

Mr McMaster's agent, Joe Hill, said he was appalled by remarks by Lord (Don) Dixon, who was one of the two MPs

named by Mr McMaster in the suicide note. Lord Dixon said that he had told Mr McMaster he would not recommend him for promotion to his job as deputy chief whip because he believed he could not have stood the pressure. "He was not particularly happy about it, but he did not show a great deal of emotion," said Lord Dixon.

Lord Dixon said he wanted to clear his name, and had no knowledge why Mr McMaster should have named him.

Mr Graham, the other Labour MP named in the note, said in a local newspaper interview that Mr McMaster had had a "drink problem" which lost him his jobs in the whip's office and as a front bench spokesman for the disabled.

The Chief Whip was urged to widen the inquiry by Dr Norman Godman, a respected Labour MP for the nearby seat of Greenock and Inverclyde, at a meeting on Monday. The BBC reported that Dr Godman wanted it to include allegations of nepotism in Monklands, and of electoral corruption in Glasgow Govan, where the Labour MP Mohammed Sarwar has been suspended. Dr Norman is reported to want the inquiry to include "alleged links between Labour figures and the laundering of drug money".

Associates of Mr McMaster said he had repeatedly complained about the pressure he was under from those close to gangs involved in the trade in Jamazepam, known as "jellies". "This inquiry will only skim the surface unless it goes into Glasgow and the drugs connection," said a former friend at Westminster.

His close friends confirmed there was a whispering campaign. He was accused of being gay, but those who knew him said he was not homosexual.

His agent said he was upset at being accused of suffering from AIDS. "He would say - there were certain people who he thought were out to do him damage."

Jack McConnell, general secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, insisted yesterday that any allegations made about Labour should be investigated "thoroughly and ruthlessly".

Scottish saga, page 6



Fashion frames art as Vivienne Westwood, controversial madame of British fashion, puts her son, Ben, and Jerry Hall (above) in the Queen and her Punk, a pastiche of Van Dyck's *Henrietta Maria and her Dwarf*, as part of an advertising campaign, writes Melanie Rickley.

Westwood has finally decided not to rely on 13-year-

old girls, dresses worn with no knickers, and men in skirts to get column-inches and has produced a campaign set to hit British, French and American glossy magazines next month.

Carlo D'Amario, managing director of the Independent company, which had a £15m turnover last year, decided it was time for them to "grow up", as he put it. "It's a thank-

you for all the years magazines have supported us without advertising," he said.

"We must become adult; we are growing up and going to university," he said, "but we want to remain self-funded; we won't sell out." And what is more, on top of the advertising, fans who haven't got the ready cash to purchase a Westwood suit, (average price £600), will be

pleased to know that a range encompassing the entire fashion career of Westwood from 1970, touching on the 1976 Seditionaries collection, and in particular to the 1981 Pirates collection, is to be launched in January. It has been named Anglomania, which refers to Westwood's love of fashion history.

Photograph: Paolo Barbieri

More than ever get A-levels

Judith Judd and
Lucy Ward

A record pass-rate for A-level is expected to be announced tomorrow but the rise in the proportion of students getting top grades has levelled off.

Thousands of candidates will also learn tomorrow whether they have achieved the grades they need for university entry.

Official figures are understood to show that the overall A-level pass-rate this summer is up just over 1 percentage point on last year's figure of 86 per cent. The pass-rate for the exam has gone up by between 1 and 2 per cent in each of the last 16 years. Last year the rise was 1.8 per cent.

But the improvement in the proportion getting A grades has slowed. In 1989 the pass-rate was around 75 per cent and the percentage of entries awarded A grades was only 11.4. Since then, the proportion of A grades has gone up steadily by on average 0.7 per cent a year.

Exam officials believe that one explanation for this year's figures may be the increasing number of modular examinations, in which pupils sit a series of tests throughout their two-year course plus one final exam.

Pass-rates are higher for modular exams because students can resit them or drop out if they fear they will not make the grade. However, as last year's results suggested, top grades are harder to achieve because students have to maintain a high performance over two years.

This year the proportion of modular entries has doubled from 15 to 30 per cent. Last year modular courses were confined to English, science and maths. This year they include geography, business studies, government and politics and economics.

A study from Newcastle University suggested that candidates

who took modular exams were likely to receive higher grades.

But exam officials say that modular exams do not provide the whole explanation for the higher pass-rate since only a third of exams are modular.

One explanation may be that girls' performance at A-level has been improving rapidly. Another may be that the proportion of young people in the top two social classes, who tend to do better in the exam, has increased by 20 per cent.

The improved A-level grades are likely to fuel the annual controversy over whether the exams are getting easier. Traditionalists maintain that standards have slipped but teachers say that both they and their pupils are working harder. Research published last December showed that standards have remained broadly the same.

The rise in the pass-rate this year means that, since more students will fulfil their conditional university offers, fewer course vacancies will be available in the annual clearing process which matches students with courses.

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, has warned that the trend could add to the chaos predicted as thousands more students than usual apply late through clearing to snatch the last free university places before fees are introduced in 1998.

Students planning to take a gap year are waiting to hear whether they will be eligible for limited exemptions from tuition fees being offered by the Government.

Consultations with university leaders and voluntary bodies were underway yesterday as the Department for Education and Employment finalised details of the exemption scheme.

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INSIDE THE HIDDEN WORLD OF N. KOREA PAGE 9



THE NEW REVENGERS TABLOID PAGE 2



Divorce-proof marriage unveiled

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

The United States is going through one of its periodic bouts of nostalgia for the good old days. This time, the subject is marriage. Wouldn't it be wonderful, sighs a vocal section of opinion, if Americans could get married and stay married, have their children in wedlock, and live happily ever after, just like those blissful families of the sanitised garden suburbs and the Fifties photographs?

After months of preparation and discussion, the southern state of Louisiana has decided to do something. On Friday, a law comes into force for a trial period that will establish two classes of marriage: the "per-

manent" - or covenant - marriage, and the rest.

The difference comes before the marriage (pre-marital counselling for covenanters, none for the rest) and then if the marriage fails. If you are married without a covenant, you can untie the knot with the minimum of formality. In Louisiana even now, a couple can end a marriage by consent after only six months.

If you have a covenant marriage, however, certain conditions must be met before divorce is possible. They include desertion by one or other spouse, adultery, two years' separation, physical or sexual abuse, or either spouse being sentenced to a long prison sentence.



The right-wing Christian Coalition naturally loves the

idea. It has been in the forefront of campaigning to make divorce more difficult.

A section of economic opinion is all for it, too. Between them, they argue, more durable marriages would reduce the number of single mothers on benefits, reduce the number of Saturday-fathers, reduce the number of tug-of-love children, and reduce the cut to lawyers from lengthy divorce proceedings. That is even before you count the emotional cost of divorce to all concerned and the mooted link between broken homes, poor school performance and juvenile crime.

The reasons for concern are evident: almost half of all marriages in the United States currently end in divorce, and the

increase in "no-fault" divorce is one factor often cited.

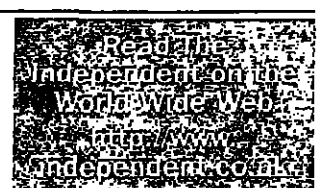
The new arrangements in Louisiana none the less have their critics. Some fear a return to the "faked" adulteries and other habits of the bad old days to end a marriage. Others say that making divorce harder, even if both parties agree in advance that it should be harder, will only add to the pain if the marriage genuinely fails.

All in all, though, the state legislators felt that reducing the divorce rate was an aim that was sufficiently desirable to justify at least trying the Covenant. And a great many other states, not just in the conservative south, are watching closely to see how it will fare.

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news

significant shorts

Sinn Fein to challenge oath of allegiance

Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, Martin McGuinness, has started court action challenging the legality of MPs being asked to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen.

The member for Mid Ulster is also contesting the legality of MPs being denied their parliamentary privileges if they refuse.

Just hours before his live television debate with Ulster Unionist Ken Maginnis last night, solicitors acting on his behalf lodged papers at the Northern Ireland High Court in Belfast seeking a judicial review of the oath's legality.

It came after Betty Boothroyd, the House of Commons Speaker, decided to impose restrictions on his access to Parliament and the services and facilities available to him.

Mr McGuinness said: "This is an unlawful and procedurally improper process and it should be quashed." Sinn Fein said it expected the High Court hearing would be fairly soon.

If Mr McGuinness is successful, then he and Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, MP for West Belfast, will have access to full Commons facilities.

Microlight pilot killed

The pilot of a microlight aircraft was killed yesterday as he took off from an airfield, police said.

South Yorkshire police said the crash happened just before 3pm at Netherthorpe Aerodrome, near Worksop. The pilot was a member of Sheffield Aero Club. A spokesman for the club declined to comment and the pilot has not been named. Air accident teams are investigating.

BT told to end call minder monopoly

BT must allow rival firms to offer alternatives to its Call Minder voice-mail service, the telecoms watchdog Ofcom said yesterday. Ofcom said other companies should be able to set up competing services to BT's system, which answers calls, records messages and alerts customers when they have messages waiting. Earlier this year, BT was ordered to stop promoting Call Minder and not take on new customers, amid accusations that the way the service was operated discriminated against rival companies setting up alternatives.

Hague's youthful headgear on sale



William Hague baseball caps will go on sale at Conservative Central Office later this week – just days after the Tory leader modelled the headgear.

The caps, priced at about £7, bear Mr Hague's surname on the front and the party's latest slogan, "A fresh future", on the back. Conservative Party sources said demand was growing for the designer hats since the leader sported one on a visit to a Cornish theme park last week.

Mr Hague's fashion statement, interpreted as part of his bid to woo young voters, has been successful in inspiring at least one letter from a young Conservative requesting a cap. Although there are no plans for a matching T-shirt, the party is looking at "other ideas" for merchandising.

Prince Charles poses for popularity

On the day it was revealed that support for the Royal Family had fallen to below 50 per cent, Prince Charles chose to break with years of tradition and pose with his sons at the start of the Balmoral summer holiday yesterday.

His aides denied that the photocall was an attempt to portray Prince Charles in a sympathetic light, coming within days of the pictures of his ex-wife's holiday embrace appearing world-wide.

As the media frenzy over Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dodi al-Fayed continued, the new figures forecast a dim future for the royals. An ICM poll carried out for the *Guardian* found that a growing minority believed Britain would be better off without the monarchy. The fall in popular support, tumbling from 70 per cent three years ago, shows the damage inflicted on the royals' reputation by recent revelations. Now, 48 per cent think Britain would be worse off without the royals. Outright hostility to the Royal Family has grown from 13 per cent a decade ago to 30 per cent now.

Kate Watson-Smyth

Murdered aid worker's wife flies home

The wife of murdered aid worker Michael Pollard is to fly home from Hungary today. Jo Pollard, of Baildon, near Bradford, West Yorkshire, has been recovering in Nyiregyhaza hospital after a savage roadside attack last week in which her 62-year-old husband Michael, a church pastor, was beaten to death.

Doctors said 55-year-old Mrs Pollard would be able to leave hospital tomorrow after doing "marvellously well" following an operation last Friday. Mrs Pollard suffered two broken jaw bones, a broken nose and bruising after being hit by an iron bar.

The couple were taking food, toys and medical supplies to orphanages in Eastern Europe, when their parked motorhome was approached by three bogus policemen demanding money. Despite handing over about £50 in local currency, the men beat Mr Pollard, and later returned to attack Mrs Pollard.

Last-minute deal heads off rail strike

The train drivers' union, Aslef, reached an 11th-hour settlement last night in their dispute with a regional railway company. The agreement comes on the day the union's members of Regional Railways North East voted overwhelmingly for a series of one-day strikes and an overtime ban.

A spokesman for Aslef said: "We have had a guideline from Regional Railways North East that it will respect the rights of our members to so-called quality time."

Mother of drug-shooting boy charged

The mother of Dillon Hull, the five-year-old boy shot dead in the street in an apparent drugs-related attack, has been charged with conspiracy to supply heroin.

Jane Hull, 29, of Juncney Street, Bolton, was due to be committed to Preston Crown Court yesterday, but the magistrates adjourned the case until 9 September. Ms Hull is alleged to have attempted to smuggle the drug into Preston prison on October 29 last year. She did not appear in court when the case was listed yesterday.

Dillon was shot in the street last week together with his stepfather John Bates, who escaped with stomach wounds. Mr Bates and Ms Hull returned to their terrace house but are since believed to have been moved to a "safe house" under police protection after protests from neighbours.

Spitting Image puppets stolen from car

Writers from the TV show *Spitting Image* were spitting mad yesterday after a thief made off with two of their puppets. The crook broke into puppet maker Simon Quinn's Volkswagen Golf and fled with two latex puppets worth more than £4,000 each.

The puppets – two alien space beings called Org and Throx – appeared in Channel 4's *The Ship Show*. The 14-inch puppets were in the boot of Mr Quinn's car when it was broken into at Badminton, Bristol.

people



Christian Slater: 'Romantic kind of guy who sends flowers to women'

Brat-pack actor arrested on triple-assault charge

Christian Slater claims to have turned his back on his Hollywood bad-boy image, but the brat-pack actor's behaviour at a party earlier this week suggests that he is living up to his reputation.

The 27-year-old actor – who has starred in such films as *True Romance*, *Murder in the First*, *Heathers*, and *Interview with the Vampire* – was arrested in the early hours of Monday, following a heated argument with his girlfriend and a scuffle with police, according to Detective Ron Phillips of the Los Angeles Police Department.

Police were called to a condominium in Westwood, Los Angeles, where a row had broken out between Slater and his girlfriend as the party was winding down. The 25 people who had witnessed the argument, in which Slater allegedly bit a man in the stomach, told the police that he had fled the 14th-floor apartment through the stairwell. The officers caught up with him between the eighth and ninth floors and a scuffle ensued. Slater was taken into custody and charged with three counts of assault with a deadly weapon and one count of battery. Detective Phillips refused to describe the weapon, which could range from his fists to a firearm, but added that Slater was examined at a hospital before being taken to jail. "I won't elaborate on the injuries... but he's in fine condition."

Three years ago, Slater was arrested at a New York airport for carrying a pistol in his luggage and subsequently spent 10 days in jail.

Recently he likened himself to the sensitive, romantic suitor he played in the film, *Bad Boy*. "I consider myself a romantic kind of guy who sends flowers to women," he said. He has been linked with a string of celebrities including Winona Ryder, Christy Turlington and Samantha Mathis, and has a reputation for falling in love with his co-stars, including Helen Slater and Patricia Arquette.

Clare Garner

Screen star returns to grace the Sussex stage

Screen actress Kathleen Turner

yesterday swapped the glamour of

America's west coast for

England's south coast, when she

opened in a new production of

Somerset Maugham's play, *Our*

Betters, at the Chichester Festival.

It will be her second Chichester

theatre stint, following her starring

role in *Talulah* at the Chichester

Festival Theatre last month.

Ms Turner, who was

Hollywood's biggest-grossing

female star of the 1980s, said she

had been lured from the US by the

challenge of the theatre. "I'm

putting myself on the line because

stage work is more rewarding and

has that edge. In films you are

given a safety net, but in the

theatre no one is there to cover up

your mistakes," she said.

Her salary will be far from

movie-star standards; she will

receive about £500 a week. "This

is not about how much money one

is paid," she said earlier this year.

Ms Turner is familiar with

England, having lived with her

family in London as a teenager,

while her father was consul at the

American Embassy. At the age of

17, she had been about to enrol in

a London drama school when he

suffered a heart attack and died.

But in response to calls for Mr Sai-

ni to be allowed to stay on humani-

tarian grounds, Mike O'Brien, the

immigration minister, said last night:

"I will look carefully at the comments

of the adjudicator and any compas-

sionate circumstances in this case.

The death of Mr Saini's brother was

certainly tragic, but I will be reluctant

to reward someone for using extreme

methods to evade the immigration



The family returned to Springfield,

Missouri, and she embarked on an

acting career in America.

At the age of 25, she landed the

role that was to change her career:

the seductive Maddy Walker

opposite William Hurt in the 1981

thriller *Body Heat*. She followed

that with box office hits such as

Prizzi's Honour, *Crimes of*

Passion, *Peggy Sue Got Married*,

Romancing the Stone and *Jewel*

of the Nile.

She lives in New York with her

husband of 14 years, Jay Weiss

and their six-year-old daughter,

Rachel.

Ms Turner has not confined her

talents to the stage; she has three

films out before Christmas. Her

recent work includes a comedy

with Matthew Modine, *Real*

Blondes, a singing voice-over for

Lion King II and a comic fantasy in

which she plays a fairy godmother.

Jojo Moyes

Playboy tycoon sets sights on presidency

Richard Lugner, the Austrian

construction tycoon, famous for re-

portedly paying £50,000 to dance

with the Duchess of York at the

glitzy Vienna Opera Ball on New

Year's Eve, has announced that he

intends to stand for president.

The 64-year-old, whose annual

quest for partners has netted sev-

eral of the world's most famous

women including Sophia Loren,

Isabella Rossellini, Joan Collins and

Grace Jones, said he would fi-

nance his candidature with his

own money.

President Thomas Klestil's six-

year term in office ends in 1998

and the elections are scheduled to

be held in April next year.

Lugner, ridiculed in Austrian so-

ciety as a flashy parvenu, said he

would campaign as an "unpolitical

person from the business world"

and that he was not being sup-

ported by any political grouping.

He is nicknamed "moerle",

meaning "concrete", which is

meant to indicate the thickness of

his skin and possibly his intellectu-

al level. He regards this as a com-

pliment and has even launched his

own brand of Moerle beer.

His rivals complain that he will

do anything for publicity and has

been known to appear at other

balls in drag.

Kate Watson-Smyth

Deportation reprieve for stowaway

The Government agreed last night to

look again at the case of an Indian

stowaway denied political asylum

after surviving 10 hours in the frozen

undercarriage of a jumbo jet.

Pardeep Saini, 23, emerged from the

wheelbay of a British Airways Bo-

eing 747 following his incredible jour-

ney from Delhi last October, but his

19-year-old brother Vijay froze to

death in the -60C temperatures.

Relatives in Britain reacted with dis-

appointment and anger yesterday af-

ter an immigration adjudicator not-

ified that there was insufficient evi-

dence to support a claim that Mr Sai-

ni, a Sikh, faced persecution in the

Punjab because of allegations that he

had links with Sikh extremists.

But in response to calls for Mr Sai-

ni to be allowed to stay on humani-

tarian grounds, Mike O'Brien, the

immigration minister, said last night:

"I will look carefully at the comments

of the adjudicator and any compas-

sionate circumstances in this case.

The adjudicator has con-

firmed that Mr Saini does not qual-

ify for asylum. Consideration must

therefore be given to his removal, al-

though we will consider any medical

and other reports which are for-

warded to the Home Office."

Mr Saini's uncle, Tarsem Singh

Bola, who lives in Southall, west Lon-

don, said his nephew was still re-

ceiving treatment for psychological

trauma. "He has four uncles and

many cousins here and we would

have looked after him properly."

Mr Bola sought a meeting yester-

day with Southall Labour MP Pira

Khabra, who has campaigned for Mr

Saini to be allowed to stay on hu-

manitarian grounds. Mr Khabra said

yesterday: "I am disappointed with the

decision of the Home Secretary, but

I am more interested in the humani-

tarian side of the case. He has lost his

brother. He nearly died himself. His

father recently died. I will be making

representations to the Home Sec-

retary to allow him exceptional leave to

stay on compassionate grounds."

The adjudicator, Kate Eschen,

ruled that the asylum application

failed because answers in an inter-

view with immigration officers short-

ly after Mr Saini stumbled onto the

tarmac at Heathrow conflicted with

later statements.

His lawyers told the hearing that

Mr Saini and his brother had fled af-

ter police beat them and Mr Saini was

still dazed and confused at the time

of the initial interview. Medical experts

have suggested that he could have

gone into a form of suspended ani-

mation because of the extreme cold.

The family's lawyers are planning

to apply for leave to appeal to the Im-

migration Appeal Tribunal.

Claude Moraes, director of the

Joint Council for the Welfare of Im-

migrants, said: "It is my opinion he

should have been allowed to remain,

given his ordeal and the fact that he

had a prima facie and reasonably

strong case for asylum... It was such

an exceptional case that it would not

have been repeated."

Vijay's body fell from the aircraft as

the undercarriage was lowered and

was found at a disused gasworks in

Richmond, south-west London.

Students struggle to bridge the gap

Last-minute bid to avoid fiasco over fees exemption

Paying the cost for a year of action

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Government yesterday came under fire from voluntary groups as it launched a last-minute consultation over moves to exempt some gap-year university students from tuition fees.

Charities insisted that proposals to confine the exemption to students who had arranged voluntary work for their year out by 23 July – the date ministers announced plans to introduce fees – would catch out thousands of well-intentioned potential volunteers who would only make arrangements in the autumn.

Without this waiver, such students might decide to seek a university place this year instead or might look for paid work to help ease future debts, charities fear.

The Community Service Volunteers, which places some 1,200 school-leavers annually on projects helping young offenders or children struggling with reading, warned of a "risk that the energy of young people could be lost".

The groups also renewed pressure for an extension of special deals for gap-year volunteers beyond next year – a step understood to be looked on favourably by David Blunkett, the Secretary for Education and Employment. Charities want students who commit a significant portion of their year out to volunteering to be exempted from a year's tuition fees – equivalent to £1,000. Voluntary groups made their case as Department for Education and Employment officials rang round those accepting high numbers of gap-year students, asking for views on the terms of the proposed fees exemption.

Following concerns that students intending to take a year off would rush for university places this year to avoid fees being imposed from 1998, it emerged that the Government proposes to allow students hold-

ing a deferred place and planning at least three months' voluntary work to be exempted from the charges.

However, questions still remain over the detail of the fee waiver plan. Yesterday's consultation – in preparation for a formal announcement at the end of the week – drew accusations from some voluntary bodies of "policy-making on the hoof".

The CSV insisted any exemption should include all students taking a year out, regardless of whether they already had a university place for 1998, and should cover anyone volunteering for at least four months during the year.

Executive director Elizabeth Hoodless said: "The reality is that young people don't plan ahead. To drop a line at 23 July is to punish all those who haven't got round to arranging voluntary work yet."

CSV gets most inquiries from gap year students in the autumn, as does the Prince's Trust, one of the charities cited as an approved organisation whose volunteers would qualify for exemptions. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which takes on volunteer wardens, also usually hears from students in September.

Gap Activity Projects (GAP), which will send over 1,300 gap year students to do voluntary work in 30 countries next year, also pressed for an extension of the fees waiver to aspiring students without a deferred place.

Some universities and some courses refuse to allow would-be students to defer places, forcing them to apply during a gap year.

The DFEE consultation also concerns the amount of time students are being asked to devote to voluntary work in order to become eligible for a fees waiver. Charities have been asked whether they think three months is long enough or whether four or even six months would be more appropriate.



Why Chi had to shelve his plans

When Chi Cheung (right) heard the Government proposed charging students fees and abolishing grants from next autumn, he changed his plans. He had a place at London University's School of Pharmacy from next September but decided to go this year. He had planned to work for a year in the University of Hertfordshire library. "People are talking about students leaving with a debt of between £5,000 and £8,000. That might double or treble if I don't go now. Living in London is very expensive."



'I can't afford to work for charity'

If Lily Williams had known about the Government's decision on tuition fees, she would have applied to university this year. As it is, she has offers of places at Sussex and East Anglia for next autumn but did not apply this year to her first choice, Edinburgh, because it does not accept students a year in advance.

She still wants to go to Edinburgh to read history and politics and intends to continue plans to teach English in Spain. She believes the fees concession which will exempt students who work for charity



Stage set for an expensive interval

Adele Walker (right) made up her mind to take next year off before university last spring, when six applications for performing-arts degree courses produced no offers she was happy with.

Three weeks ago she learned her decision to reapply would cost thousand in fees, a bleak prospect for an aspiring actress seeking to enter a poorly paid profession. Adele, 18, who has just done a BTEC qualification in performing arts at Wilmore College, Derby, considered joining the scramble for



places this autumn through the clearing system but decided to stick with her original plan. "I am not happy about having to pay fees ... But I can't just readjust everything or change my career plans because of this. I am not going to rush into clearing and get on a course I don't really want when I have wanted to be an actress since I was 13." Adele has already begun seeking acting experience for her year off to boost her CV.

Warning: sweltering may be bad for your health

Kate Watson-Smyth

The Great British Public loves nothing more than to talk about the weather and discuss its aches and pains, and this year the two favourite topics of conversation have come together in perfect harmony as medical experts warned yesterday that the

hot weather is bad for the nation's health.

What's more the subject looks set to run and run as the sweltering heat is set to continue for most of the week, according to forecasters.

Temperatures reaching nearly 90F (32C) in parts of the country during the last few

days have sparked a corresponding rise in breathing problems, chest pains and other complaints exacerbated by dehydration including kidney stones.

Dr Rosemary Morton, spokeswoman for Manchester Royal Infirmary, said the Accident and Emergency depart-

ment has also been treating many more cases of assault caused by the hot spell.

"The heat makes everybody uncomfortable and the aggravation leads to more injuries from assault," she said.

"Also people tend to drink more, and of course that includes alcohol which leads to

other problems as well."

"On a busy day we would see maybe 170 people but in the last couple of days we've seen in excess of 225."

Dr David Snashall, clinical director of occupational health services at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, London, said short bursts of hot and hu-

mid weather could trigger heart attacks in the elderly and cause insomnia and discomfort.

"Tiny babies and the elderly find it hardest to cope with spells of hot weather," he said.

The National Asthma Campaign also warned that sudden changes in weather can trigger serious respiratory problems

for asthmatics.

Spokeswoman Marsha Williams said that in a recent survey of asthma sufferers, 60% claimed that weather changes affected their condition "quite a lot or even a great deal".

But she added that some asthmatics "will get more wheezy and breathless in this

humid weather whereas others would find it more difficult to cope with a cold snap," she said.

"Temperatures are likely to remain high over the next few days, which means that even if the topic of Diana and Dodi is exhausted there will still be plenty of scope to talk about the weather."

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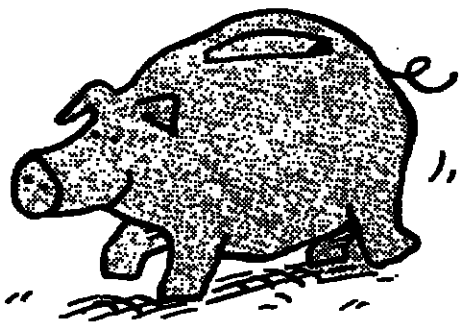
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news

When it's all done and dusted, our band will go down in history
as one of the greatest of all time (But are they right?)



Now here this: Oasis followers queued at record shops for a chance to listen to their rock idol's latest offering

Photograph: Tony Buckingham

A nation queues to find out what's the story on the Gallaghers' big day

By Alexandra Williams

Unable to buy the album last night, Oasis fans had to take home cardboard cut-outs of Noel and Liam at £12.99 a brother instead.

The loyal followers arrived in droves at record stores across the country to hear the band's latest album *Be Here Now* for the first time. It does not go on sale until August 21.

Fans queued outside the Virgin stores where the album, almost a year in the making, was being played on their radio station at 8.30pm.

The band has said *Be Here Now* is the most important album of their career.

The band's songwriter Noel Gallagher said: "It's the one that's either going to send us up to U2's level or see us back on the dole."

He predicted the long-awaited third album would be one of the most important in rock history.

He said: "When it's all done and dusted, our band will go down in history as one of the greatest of all time."

"That is not bravado, that is fact. We will not be a footnote - we'll be a footnote in the history of rock music."

"We want to blow every band into oblivion. I suppose we are saying, 'right move over now, the big boys are back in town'."

Only a handful of reviewers have been allowed to hear the hallowed tape, and they have

had to sign detailed Creation Record contracts promising they will not play it to anyone else or even discuss it.

Music Week, the authoritative trade magazine, said *Be Here Now* is "worthy of all the

anticipation ... epic, anthemic and massively commercial".

Record retailers are counting on Oasis to revitalise the music market after a slow summer following the relatively low calibre of releases. Gennaro

Castaldo, spokesman for HMV, said: "This is exactly what the music industry needs."

"There has been feverish anticipation. People are almost not being rational about it. Many have left deposits to ensure

they get a copy on August 21."

HMV has ordered "hundreds of thousands of copies" and Mr Castaldo says he is confident at least one million albums will be sold.

Oasis has rationed radio stations to four of the album's tracks until Monday when they will be able to play the complete album.

Unusually, the album goes on sale on a Thursday, August 21. This is to coincide with its worldwide release schedule. But even three days of sales should see it comfortably at the top of the British charts.

The influences of Oasis' heroes the Beatles and the Labour Party are evident.

The cover is a T photomontage of yesterday, incorporating many references to the Beatles. A Rolls Royce floats in a swimming pool. The registration plate is the same as the police van parked on the sleeve of the Beatles' Abbey Road album.

The song *Magic Pie* on the album borrows from Tony Blair's conference speech last year which looked forward to the new millennium. The lyrics contain the line: "There are but a thousand days preparing for a thousand years."

Be Here Now - but will it be around for ever?

Andrew Mueller

Be Here Now, Oasis' third album, will probably end up being the biggest-selling record in British history. It doesn't matter whether you buy it or not, such is Oasis' ubiquity that the only way to avoid hearing every song on *Be Here Now* so often that you end up knowing them better than your own families would be to relocate to a soundproof shed on the Faeroe Islands. Like it or not, *Be Here Now* will be the soundtrack for the next few months. A shame, then, that it isn't up to much.

Oasis play to their strengths, which means plenty of trademark trebly backwash of electric guitar, and plenty of Liam Gallagher's unimpeachably gorgeous voice. But in the past, Liam's voice and presence and Noel's defiant arrogance have been enough to distract attention from their lamer lyrics. On *Be Here Now* it sounds like Noel's starting to run out of ideas or, as a cynic might have it, of other people's ideas.

The single, 'Do You Know What I



Mean?' is typical: a slew of non-sequiturs set to the structure of 'Champagne Supernova', with Beatles references and a vague call-to-arms thrown in. Of the rest, 'My Big Mouth' and 'It's Getting Better, Man' could both be two minutes shorter (Noel Gallagher can't justify these solos, 'I Hope I Think I Know' is lyrically lazy even by Oasis' slothful standards ('If I stumble, catch me when I fall') though partly redeemed by the production,

which is crystalline throughout the album.

Noel does the singing on 'Magic Pie', which might charitably be described as 'uneventful', and he should have known better than 'All Around The World', a fatuous all-join-hands singalong that, if it had been sung instead by Norway at Eurovision, would have earned a resounding nil points, and quite rightly.

The title track and 'Stand By Me' are nearly - but not quite - good enough to rescue things on their own. The former is an interesting cross between My Bloody Valentine's 'Glider' and Slade's 'Gudbuy T'Jane', and the deceptively-titled latter has one of those glorious Gallagher choruses that sound like sunrise. But these two moments can't make up for a disappointingly dull hour. Definitely *Maybe* and *What's The Story?* (*Morning Glory*) were great records because they were made by a band who sounded like they wanted the world. On *Be Here Now*, they sound like they know they've got it, and there's nothing more certain to ruin a great rock'n'roll band than satisfaction.

Labour income from unions below 50%

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

More than half the Labour Party's income now comes from sources other than the trade union movement.

Figures released yesterday by the party in advance of the publication of the annual report in two weeks' time show that in 1996, 54.8 per cent of the party's income of £17.1m came from individuals and fund-raising rather than the trade unions, the traditional source of income. This is the first time in the party's

near century of existence that trade unions have not been the source of over half its income, but with 45 per cent still coming from unions, Labour is still highly dependent on their goodwill especially as its current overdraft stands at £4.75m.

Figures for 1996, also a year preceding an election, show that 77.1 per cent of income came from trade unions and only 2.1 per cent from fund-raising compared with 36.9 per cent in 1996.

Labour's income increased dramatically from £12.5m in

1995 to £17.1m, helped by the use of professional fund-raising agencies who, on a commission basis, ring party members to contribute to party funds.

Labour says that it now receives £5m per year in standing orders. It still receives relatively little in direct donations from business but it raises considerable sums from letting out space at its annual conference and from £500 a head corporate dinners.

The release of the figures was designed to take the heat of Labour following the debacle over the shareholdings of Lord

Simon, the former BP chairman and now a junior minister at the DTI. Labour said that when it publishes the full figures later this month, they will reveal the identity of any donors of sums over £5,000. However, the figures will not reveal amounts given to the so-called "blind trust" used to finance Tony Blair's office when he was leader of the opposition and set up by Michael Levy, the music producer and Mr Blair's tennis partner who was made a peer in the recent honours list. In a further move to deflect criticism

of Labour's financial affairs, the chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party, Clive Soley, wrote to William Hague asking him whether he had taken any action over Conservative Party funding.

Mr Soley said: "Aside from a vague promise to ban foreign donations and reveal the names of major donors we have no clear sign that you are determined to clean up the taint of dishonesty that covers Tory party funding."

Mr Soley said that there had been an increase in "loans

payable" of £3m in the latest *Tory accounts* and an increase in donations from £12.7m to £18.8m, "the vast majority of which cannot be traced from any known UK source". Mr Soley also said Mr Hague should return the £360,000 donated to the Conservatives by fugitive Cypriot businessman Asil Nadir.

Conservative Central Office rebutted Mr Soley's remarks, saying that Mr Hague had already created a board of treasurers to oversee the opening up of the party's funding.

DAILY POEM

A visit to the countryside

By C P Surendran

The gurkha liked him. One day
While watching TV together.
The gurkha saw his village.
Light up the room. Come
With me to my place, he said.
You'll like it there.
Not a wry place like this.
Only, salt's hard to come by.
He looked himself in the eye
And thought about her.
Salt's no trouble, he said, let's go.

This poem comes from the latest issue of the *London Magazine* (£7.95), edited by Alan Ross. Celebrating 50 years of Indian independence, it embraces new fiction, verse, essays, memoirs, photographs and reviews. Subscriptions to the *London Magazine* cost £28.50 per year from 30 Thurloe Place, London SW7.

Elvis has god on his side

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The 20th anniversary of Elvis's death finds Americans worshipping him as they would a deity, while in Britain The King's fans are planning a night with Alvin Stardust.

On Sunday *Elvis and The Presbyterians*, a BBC1 documentary, will say the way he has been worshipped since his death has more in common with a messiah than a singer. The programme finds fans who believe Elvis was sent to fulfil a biblical prophecy and some who are convinced a blue light shone in the sky above Tupelo

when he was born in 1935. The BBC has unearthed a previously unheard recording of Elvis claiming to be on a higher plane of spiritual being than ordinary people. At the Elvis Gospel Church the programme's maker, theologian Karen Armstrong, found preachers who use fan worship to bring Elvis fans to Jesus.

Ms Armstrong also explores how, for those who want to see them, there are connections between Jesus and Elvis: both died an ignominious death and in the Christian communion service the devout imitate the actions of their messiah, just as Elvis impersonators do, and

Elvis impersonators can be seen as the high priests in this trailer-park religion.

"People are ... trying to express in conventional religious language what Elvis has done for their lives, just as they did for Jesus and Muhammad. People have ... found the sacred in Elvis," says Ms Armstrong.

A fan tells the programme: "I am convinced he is a prophecy that has come true and he will come on Judgement Day. It will be within ten years or less."

Todd Slaughter, president of the UK Elvis Presley Fan Club, said the 1,000 British fans heading for Memphis this weekend to mark the anniversary of The

King's death are unlikely to be lured into an Elvis-based Christian cult: "We Brits find it all a bit strange."

There are many things they get up to in America that take it all too far. Our members who are going to visit Graceland will probably head for the pub afterwards rather than a church. Thousands are expected in Memphis on Saturday for the anniversary.

But in Britain the fan club could not get a venue on a Saturday night, so 2,000 fans will attend a concert in the Equus theatre, Leicester Square on Sunday featuring Alvin Stardust and Marty Wilde.

50th anniversary

The trouble with the Edinburgh fringe: It's failing to lose enough money

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The organisers of Edinburgh's official and fringe festivals are today accused of failing in their "moral duty to lose money".

The shaming of his colleagues by veteran Edinburgh impresario Richard Demarco in an interview with *The Independent* brings a new dimension to festival controversies.

Where once they centred on cancelled productions, outrageous crudities or radical politics, 67-year-old Demarco has introduced a philosophical controversy. That alone is enough to bring discomfiture to the venues buzzing to the jokes of TV stand-up comedians and the clinks of glasses of Perrier at £2 a glass.

But the discomfort is increased because the ethical challenge comes from Demarco, an Edinburgh institution who attended the first festival 50 years ago, was a founder and vice chairman of the city's Traverse Theatre (the UK's first fringe venue) and for some time has run the Demarco gallery which annually brings cutting edge international theatre to the festival.

The awkwardness of Demarco's challenge was shown by the reaction of the present director of the Traverse, Philip Howard. Almost shame-facedly he admitted: "We do actually have a surplus."

He went on: "Richard Demarco is Edinburgh's greatest thinker. What he is saying is a very natural kickback to the Keynesian arguments of the Eighties about commercial drive. I like him for saying it. We need people like him. But I'm not sure morality has to encompass losing money."

Rather less deference and historical perspective was volunteered by William Burdett-Coutts, head of the premier fringe venue The Assembly Rooms and a champion of both stand-up comedy and balancing the books. He said: "It's madness. There's a moral obligation to lose money if you want to shut down. I can see the point of not making money, I can't see that there's a moral obligation to lose money. Perhaps it reflects the fact that some of his companies don't seem to make much money."

In his interview Demarco says:

"It is a moral imperative to lose money. It should be like prayer. If you say you only pray to make a profit, then to hell with it."

"The fringe is now driven by a desire for fame and success. Its end is no longer just the Edinburgh festival but the spin-off that takes you into London and television. No television executive should be allowed near the festival unless they see at least five theatre companies, and pay to see them."

"As for the official festival, when it only presents guaranteed successes then the whole thing is about absence of risk. The festival should be where you come to make your reputation. The whole of the Edinburgh festival is now governed by the idea of balancing the books and making a profit. Everyone has forgotten that that is the one thing you should not be doing."

"I have never made a profit at the festival. Is it really better to put on a stand-up comedian with a beer sponsor so you don't have enough room for the company coming from eastern Europe that might have to be fed? I feel

frustration as I remember a time when the festival was free of stand-up comics. I will lose money on the European and local community plays I am putting on including a *Romeo and Juliet* at Craigmillar Castle, but so what. I will paint more paintings, do more lectures."

At the official festival, Joanna Baker, director of marketing, replied: "Our programming is a judicious mix of the familiar and unfamiliar. We budget to break even each year."

If this aesthetic dispute is too taxing for the organisers of festival and fringe, several other controversies will keep them fraught in this acrimonious first week. Fringe director Hilary Strong says she will extend the fringe by a week to four weeks next year so that it starts a full week before

the main festival. Burdett-Coutts says that the Assembly Rooms will not be a part of the new Week Zero. Without publicity and the lure of the main festival the punters will not come, he said.

At the book festival Sir John Drummond, former Edinburgh Festival director and former head of Radio 3, criticised the BBC for its "dreary" coverage of the festival. "It is all based

on the fringe. Who cares what Mark Lamarr thinks about Scotland?", he asked, referring to the comedian hosting the BBC's *Edinburgh Nights*.

Back at the fringe Hilary Strong has upset the Scottish cultural establishment, claiming in the *Scotsman* that there was "a conspiracy among the middle class intelligentsia to keep the arts to themselves. The people who fund the arts... are very dismissive of popular tastes."

At the Traverse, Philip Howard, the artistic director, sighed: "All this self-loathing, the middle-classness of it all, it drives me absolutely berserk."

Perhaps there was a time when the organisers of the world's largest arts festival did not loathe themselves and each other. But it seems a long time ago.



Leading light: Richard Demarco sits surrounded by members of the Dze-Ya Theatre from Belarus

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Man charged with war crimes dies

Ian Burrell

Less than seven months after an Old Bailey jury decided that he was unfit to stand trial, the alleged Nazi war criminal Szymon Serafinowicz has died in hospital.

Serafinowicz, 86, had been charged with the murder of three unknown Jews in the 1940s on the Eastern Front.

But the case against him, which is believed to have cost £4m, was abandoned following an eight-day hearing at which doctors gave evidence that he was probably suffering from the progressive and incurable Alzheimer's disease.

His former solicitor Ted Dancy said yesterday that he died on Thursday after being taken into hospital two months earlier. He said: "He goes to his grave sad that he didn't have the chance to prove his innocence."

Mr Dancy said his client's condition worsened after the death of his youngest son in April. His condition was frail throughout the two years of hearings and police investigations.



Szymon Serafinowicz: his trial is believed to have cost £4m

The prosecution said that Serafinowicz commanded the local police in the Mir area of Byelorussia in the winter of 1941/2, when many Jews were slaughtered, and that he played a leading role in the killings.

The murder counts were specimen charges designed to reflect a much greater scale of involvement in the murders of

around 3,000 Jewish people in the area during the war.

The jury's decision that he was unfit to stand immediately cast a major question mark over future war crimes prosecutions in British courts.

Tory peer Lord Tebbit condemned the war crimes investigations as "a waste of the time of Parliament, the police and the judiciary and a colossal waste of public money which would have been better spent on caring for the people who suffered as a result of the Second World War".

Last night, however, Neville Nagler, director general of The Board of Deputies of British Jews said the death of Serafinowicz should not affect the hunt for Nazi war criminals. Despite the failure of the case, Mr Nagler said he believed criminal cases should go ahead if the evidence was strong enough.

He said: "He was discharged on the grounds of ill health and that decision has now been vindicated by his death."

"We will never know the truth of his activities in connection with possible war crimes."

Police get powers to bug private homes

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

Police will be legally allowed to enter and bug private homes and offices for the first time when legislation passed by the previous government is put into effect in the autumn.

Alun Michael, the Home Office minister, said safeguards in a draft code of practice published yesterday would strike a balance between protecting the public from criminals and the need to protect civil liberties. The Liberal Democrats pledged to oppose the guidelines, insisting that bugging should only be used as a last resort.

Bugging by police or customs of homes, offices or hotel bedrooms - even where confidential information held by lawyers, doctors, counsellors or journalists might be affected - will

get statutory backing once the code, which has been sent to 200 interested organisations, is approved when Parliament resumes. The system has been created by the 1997 Police Act, to replace current administrative rules on bugging, which have no legal backing.

The code says chief police or customs officers must seek authorisation from a commissioner - a retired or serving High Court judge - to conduct surveillance in these circumstances. The provision follows criticism of the last government's original proposals, which made no provision for any judicial approval or warranting, and of Labour for backing them. But in "urgent" cases officers will be able to go ahead without prior approval as long as they notify a commissioner "as soon as reasonably practicable."

Approval by a commissioner will likewise not be needed when the police bug lock-ups, garages and vehicles.

The Liberal Democrat home-affairs spokesman, Lord Rodgers of Quarry Bank, said: "The appointment of commissioners to vet applications seems certain to be inadequate to cope with the demands of a round-the-clock police service."

The Association of Chief Police Officers welcomed the code, saying it would enable effective action to continue to be taken against serious and organised crime.

The Home Office is planning to appoint a chief commissioner, who will present an annual report to the Prime Minister, and three commissioners for England and Wales, one or two for Scotland and one for Northern Ireland.

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news

McMaster's suicide was more than the tragedy of one man. It lifted the lid on a saga of gossip and in-fighting



Gordon McMaster

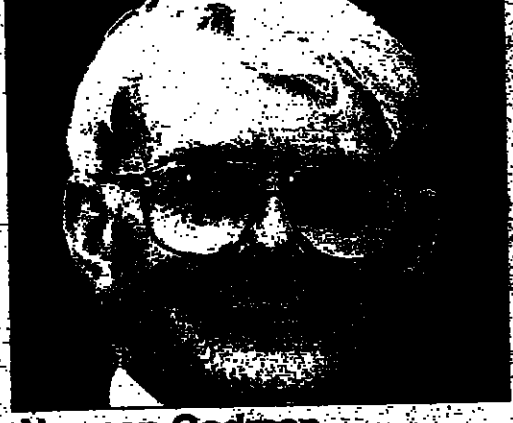
Two factors were said to have contributed to the decision of the 37-year-old MP for Paisley South to gas himself in the garage of his suburban home at Johnstone: the chronic fatigue syndrome he had suffered from for 18 months, and the fact there was a whispering campaign at Westminster and in Scotland that he was gay and suffering from the AIDS virus. Claims that 18-stone McMaster was a closet homosexual, a torment in macho west Scotland, have continued, including that he had been seen in gay bars in London and Blackpool. While Labour was in opposition, McMaster served as a whip and then as a spokesman for disabled people, but he failed to get a job in the new government.

In a type-written note found beside his body, McMaster referred to neighbouring MP Tommy Graham and former deputy whip Don Dixon. "I would rather be dead with my conscience than alive with theirs."



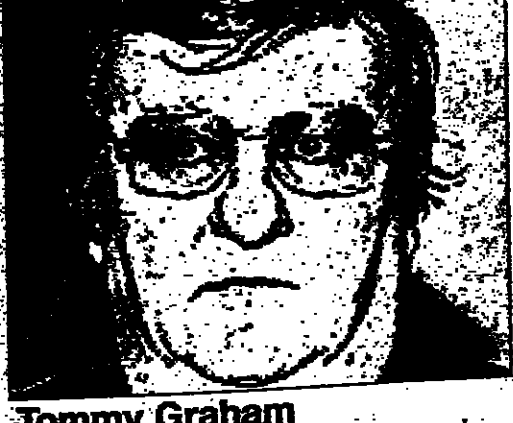
Irene Adams

Elected for Paisley North in 1990, on the same day as McMaster, Adams was also the target of smears. Allegations include claims of an affair with McMaster, and drink problems. Death threats were made against the 48-year-old MP in 1995 during her campaign against Paisley's violent drugs barons. She alleged that a security company set up with £180,000 of public money and linked to Labour councillors had become embroiled in laundering drug money. Adams was supposed to give evidence to the Labour chief whip's inquiry about the smears she and McMaster endured. Paisley North constituency party remains suspended following attempts to "black" membership lists and get Adams deselected. More than 50 "irregular" names have disappeared from the roll since Labour's Scottish headquarters began its reorganisation of the constituency party.



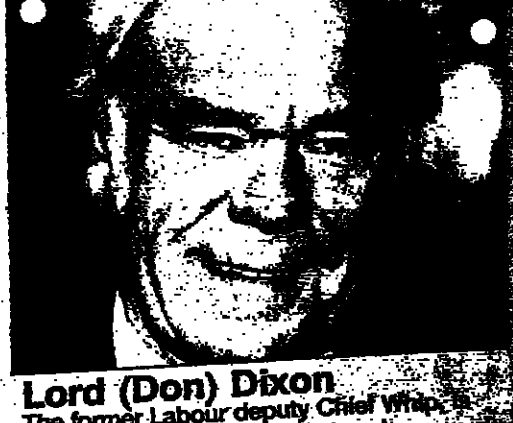
Norman Godman

Another victim of smears, the 60-year-old MP for Greenock and Inverclyde gave evidence to the Labour Chief Whip on Monday evening. A close friend of McMaster and Adams, Godman was similarly the target of attempts at deselection. The somewhat lugubrious Godman has been an MP since 1983 and is noted at Westminster as an advocate for the fishing industry. However, the whippers alleged he was a poor Commons performer and had neglected his constituency duties. Godman has pressed for a full National Executive Committee inquiry into the faction fighting and all the allegations of party vote-rigging and corruption that have blighted politics in Paisley and Renfrewshire for almost a decade.



Tommy Graham

The tough former engineering worker and MP for West Renfrewshire said to be behind the smear campaigns has been lying low. He is alleged to have plotted to oust his neighbouring MPs to get his cronies elected. After an initial denial, Graham, 53, has said nothing apart from an outburst to Glasgow's *Evening Times* at the weekend in which he described how McMaster accused him of spreading the gay rumours. "I said: 'I've never called you a poof in my life. It's not my style.' Graham told the paper. He went on: 'If the real truth came out, the guy had a drink problem. That's what lost him his job. It's a shame. The bloke was ill, wasn't he? He was ill with the booze. He couldn't drink a whisky, he had to drink doubles and doubles and doubles.'"



Lord (Don) Dixon

The former Labour deputy Chief Whip, the only non-Scott in the cast and expressed surprise at being named in McMaster's suicide note. However, yesterday he told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that when the Whip's Office was being reorganised in 1995, he told McMaster that "he could not have stood the pressure of recommending him, and I wasn't going to recommend him. I think he was having problems then and obviously they have come to the fore since," he said. Dixon insists that he had heard "no rumours" about McMaster. However, the 68-year-old former shipyard worker who became MP for Lanark has a similar background to his friend Tommy Graham, and as Whip it would have been part of his job to know damaging Westminster gossip.

Stephen Goodwin

"This isn't politics, it's an abomination." The lament of a Labour activist caught in the Byzantine faction fighting in Paisley has a resonance throughout the west of Scotland where, despite a succession of minor purges and expulsions, the party has been sullied by allegations of cronyism, petty corruption and rumoured links with organised crime.

Jack McConnell, general secretary of the Scottish Labour Party, yesterday said strict checks would be used to ensure candidates for an Edinburgh parliament were of the highest calibre. It will be the first time Labour has had a panel of candidates and the list will be carefully scrutinised by the leadership in London.

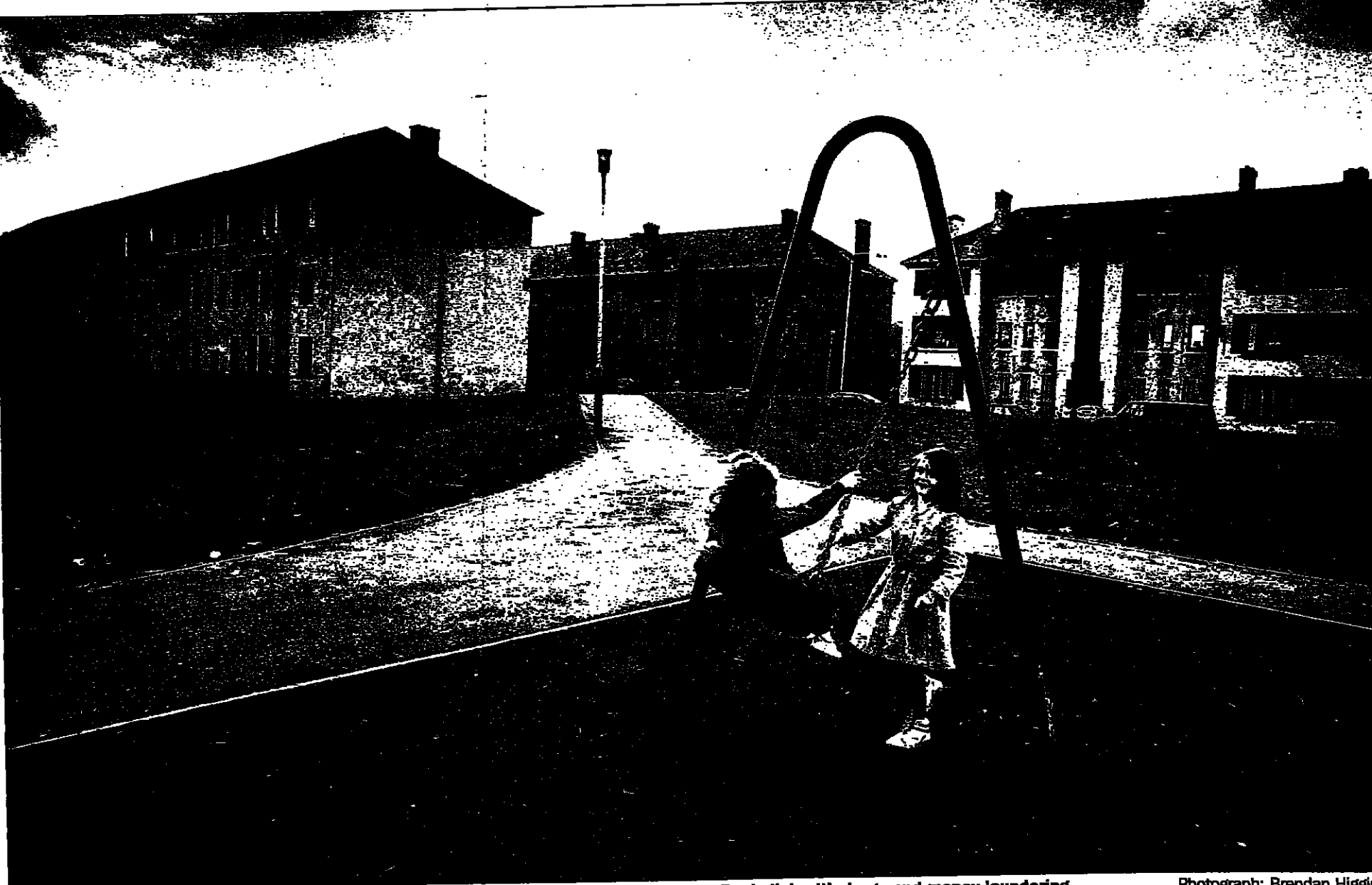
However, this assurance that the "Glasgow jimmies" won't dominate the new parliament begs the question as to how their ilk are to be rooted out across a noxious band of municipal skulduggery from North Lanarkshire, through Glasgow to Paisley in the west.

Chief whip Nick Brown believes he can come to a speedy conclusion on what drove Gordon McMaster to suicide. But if Tony Blair is ever to introduce his own brand of politics to the west of Scotland, he must try and get to the bottom of what fuels the problems in Paisley, and also discipline the Labour group on Glasgow City Council if necessary.

At the end of next month the National Executive Committee will pass judgement on the Glasgow "jimmies" scandal. Labour councillors, who hold 76 of the 83 seats on the city council, were allegedly demanding foreign trips and other perks in exchange for their support. Flights to places such as Bangkok, Rome and New York cost the public purse £200,000 last year.

Leadership sources have promised tough action to clean out any "corrupt" practices. However, the NEC's response to the Glasgow inquiry has been held back so as not to frighten the public with an old Labour bogey before the devolution referendum on 11 September.

The fate of Glasgow Govan MP Mohammed Sawar, himself a graduate of Glasgow council, hangs in the balance while Strathclyde police continue their investigation into a charge of bribing an election rival. Mr



In full swing: Paisley council is under investigation after allegations of a publicly-funded firm's link with drugs and money laundering

Photograph: Brendan Higgins

Sawar has been stripped of his parliamentary party privileges pending the outcome of all inquiries and the Govan constituency Labour party has been suspended.

Govan's woes were compounded yesterday with the defection to the Scottish National Party of Gordon Archer, a key aide to Mr Sawar in the election. Mr Archer, a Glasgow

city councillor, blamed the London leadership's tightening grip on the party in Scotland. He would probably have not made it on the list of Scottish parliamentary candidates heralded by Mr

McConnell. There have been inquiries into nepotism in Monklands and officials from Keir Hardie House, Labour's Glasgow HQ, have stepped in to sort out

abuse in North Lanarkshire and Kilmarnock. Cronyism and the pervasive problem of "jobs for the boys", often the result of councillors being able to influence staff appointments at

low levels, have been the main complaints. Mr McConnell thought he had sorted out Paisley in 1995 when three constituency parties - the two Paisleys and Ren-

frewshire West, represented by Tommy Graham, were suspended following "irregularities" in membership records. There were claims of pensioners being enlisted without their knowledge and subscriptions paid for 44 trade union members with a single cheque.

The object, according to local activists, was to influence selection ballots. A document listing irregularities in Mr Graham's constituency, including the improbable 44 new members - six of whom were also in the SNP - was sent to Keir Hardie House by three men who lost a bitter selection contest with Mr Graham.

But old electoral habits in the Paisley area seem as hard to kick as the drugs which have become the town's notorious stock in trade since Coates and Clark stopped making cotton thread for the world. On Monday, Labour's London headquarters confirmed it was looking into a block application to renew lapsed memberships in a branch of Irene Adams' Paisley North constituency. A cheque for £100 covering 20 unemployed people was received at the end of July.

Mrs Adams has been the target of smears alleging affairs with MPs, attempts to deselect her and a verbal attack by Mr Graham only last week that she is "lazy" and "milking" the death of Mr McMaster for all it's worth.

Mr McMaster had backed his neighbour in her fight against Paisley's violent drugs trade - a crusade that made enemies within Labour circles when she alleged a security company set up with public money as part of a regeneration scheme for a sink council estate was being used to launder drug proceeds.

Two councillors involved with the failed company, FCB (Security), vehemently denied any criminal links. Fraud squad officers investigated the company and a report is still being considered by the Crown Office. The Scottish Office also inquired into what had happened to £330,000 of public money paid to the firm.

If the Fraud Squad and public prosecutors have not got to the bottom of the corruption allegations in two years, the Labour leadership's task looks daunting. Mr Blair may find it easier to make an example of the foreign frolickers on Glasgow council and hope a death is sufficiently chastening for "a town called malice".

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Hume edges ahead of Dana and ex-PM in presidency bid

John Hume emerged as the clear favourite last night for the Irish presidency, with supporters seeking a clear indication of his intention to stand.

President Mary Robinson's decision to leave the post, after accepting a senior United Nations appointment, has generated problems over the succession in Dublin.

While four candidates were openly jostling for the job, opinion soundings rated the still-undecided Mr Hume, 60, Ulster's Social Democratic and Labour Party boss, as the clear favourite.

So far, the most serious contender to emerge has been Albert Reynolds, the former

Prime Minister, who worked closely with Mr Hume in efforts to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict.

He is facing strong pressure to withdraw, however, if Mr Hume decides to give up the leadership of his party and membership of both the House of Commons and the European Parliament - as well as his key role in the revived peace process - to contest the presidency.

Two other possible candidates, Fine Gael opposition party rivals Mary Banotti and Avril Doyle, are likely to step aside voluntarily if Mr Hume indicates a firm interest in taking over from Mrs Robinson when she becomes the UN's

Human Rights Commissioner next month. The position of another potential runner, Rosemary Brown, better-known as Dana, Ireland's first winner of the Eurovision Song Contest in 1970, has still to be clarified.

Dana, 44, an anti-abortion campaigner, and devout Roman Catholic now based in Birmingham, Alabama, where she presents a television show, was arriving in Dublin last night to step up her campaign for the presidency.

Pilgrims at Ireland's top marian shrine in Knock, Co Mayo, have already staged a support rally for Dana.

The reality is, however, that the entertainer will not be en-

dorsed by the 20 members of the Irish Parliament necessary to secure her nomination to run for the presidency, which attracts a salary of £100,000 a year.

Observers think that Mr Reynolds is currently the most likely next president, believing that his responsibilities to the peace talks will count on Mr Hume.

But the 65-year-old ex-taoiseach - at the centre of a marathon libel court tussle with the *Sunday Times* last year - could still be opposed from within the ranks of his own Fianna Fail party.

An election for the Irish presidency - if it is necessary - will be held on October 30.

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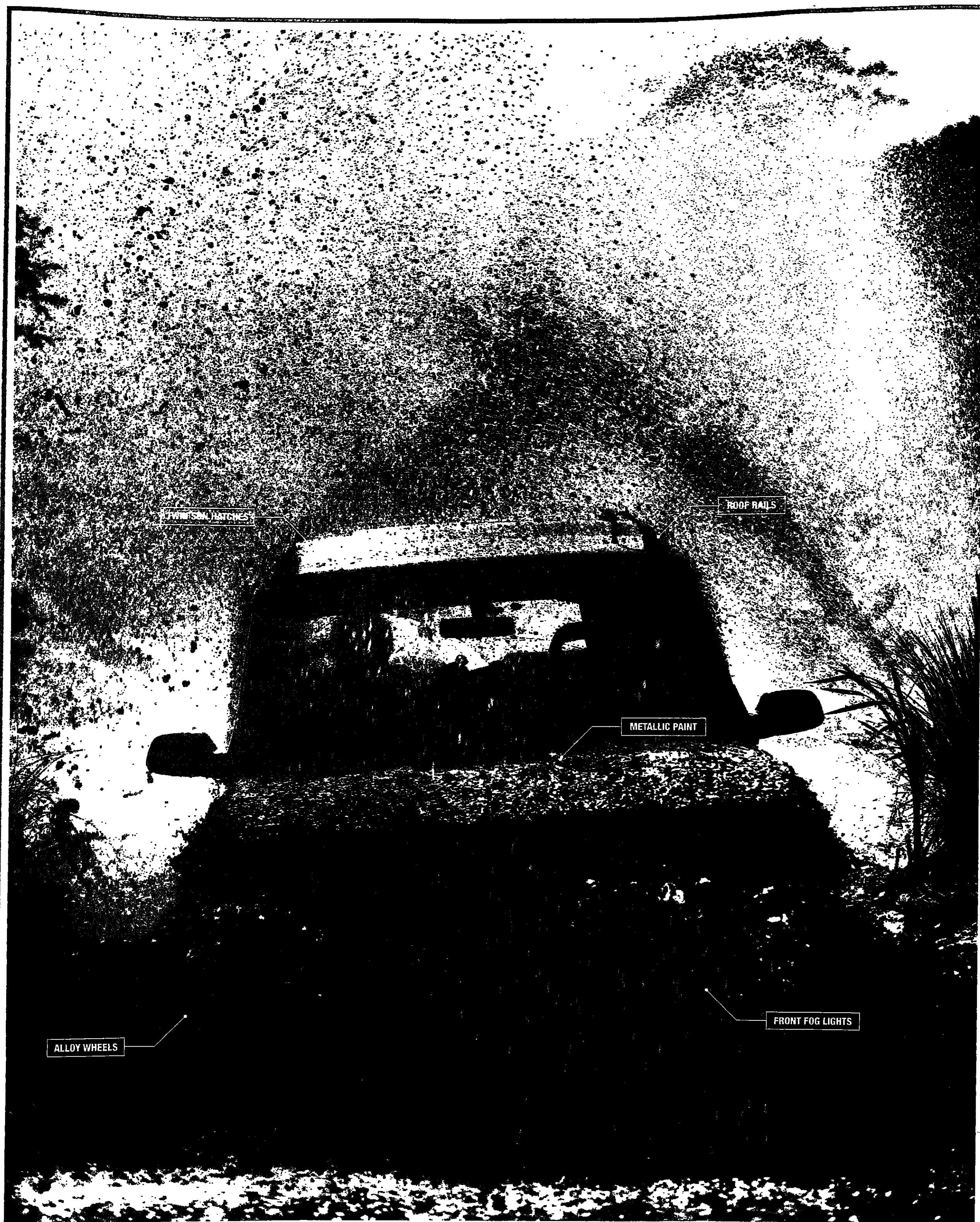
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Farmer's happy campers serve up a tastier sausage

Alexandra Williams

A herd of Oxfordshire pigs is camping in luxury tents in a farmer's bid to produce tastier sausages. Mick Eadie is convinced his porkers are of a superior quality when reared under marquee-style canopies.

Mr Eadie, of Redways Farm, Beckley, has two of the 15ft tents and each can accommodate 100 pigs.

Robert Bishop, the pig manager at Redways, swears by his motto – "a happy pig is a more flavoursome one".

He said: "They are similar to wedding tents. It's a much more natural and healthier environment for them. Our pigs taste the best. They have fresh air and are not in a horrible dark place where food is pumped to them the whole time."

"They grow more slowly because they burn off more energy, being outside, and are not forced to eat. Also they have the best grub available."

The tents enable the pigs to shelter from bad weather but still breathe fresh air. They are slaughtered at 20 weeks, which is 10 days later than if they were reared in controlled conditions.

Mr Eadie was inspired to put his pigs under canvas after seeing a Danish pig tent. They can be dismantled in an hour and moved to other sites.

The canvas forms the roof of the tent and the surround consists of straw bales. One side opens on to a run.

"Without the bale sides the pigs would rip the tents to pieces. We can alter it by moving the straw. We put more in in the winter and take some away in the summer when it gets hot. The pigs love it," said Mr Eadie.

With the tents, the 30 acre farm is harping back to a system in operation 50 years ago.

"It might be old fashioned but our customers like it," said Mr Bishop. "The housewives want to know how the pigs are reared. It's a welfare friendly system. They can run around and then sleep in deep-bedded straw."



Getting down to it: Mike Eadie with his 12-week-old pigs who are reared under canvas at their Oxfordshire farm Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Party's insurance plan may prove a casualty

Steve Boggan

New Labour is likely to face an investigation by the Data Protection Registrar after complaints from party members who have been bombarded with junk mail advertising a Labour Party insurance scheme.

Backbenchers – many of whom had no idea that the party had branched out into insurance – have been receiving calls from irate constituents whose personal details appear to have been plucked from the party's database and used by American International Group, the company underwriting the policy.

The Labour Party Casualty Plan offers up to £5,000 to members who suffer personal injuries. It is the second policy of its kind launched by the party. Last year, other mailshots advertised the Labour Party Personal Accident Protection Plan, which offered cover for up to £10,000.

This time, however, the fact that those targeted appear to be over 50 has led some MPs to conclude that the information taken from membership application forms and the party's database is being improperly used.

"I had a furious constituent on to me but I knew nothing about it," said one backbencher. "He sent me the literature and I was astonished. I had no idea we were selling insurance – it took my breath away."

"Whatever next. Ann Summers catalogues in conjunction with new Labour?"

That MP who did not wish to be named, and others, have told *The Independent* that constituents are considering reporting the matter to the Data Protection Registrar, Elizabeth France.

Under the Data Protection Act, all information must have been "fairly obtained" and the donor must be made aware of – and agree to – any future uses. It may not be passed on to a third party without the donor's permission.

The advertising literature – complete with the Labour red rose and featuring pictures of elderly people falling off ladders or tripping over garden rakes – is delivered in an envelope marked: "If undelivered, please return to The Labour Party, John Smith House" – Labour HQ.

However, an employee at UNAT Direct, an American-

based insurance company administering the scheme in Britain, said yesterday that the firm was passed information from the Labour Party. The mailshots, she said, were handled by an independent mailing company, not by the party.

"The Labour Party issues us with names and details of their members," she said. "The mail is sent out by a mailing company. I think this went out to members over 50."

Party membership forms do not carry a statement explaining that information may be passed on to third parties for marketing purposes. There is a section, however, asking applicants for their date of birth.

A Labour Party spokeswoman confirmed that members' details are passed to the insurance company and the mailing house but on a purely confidential basis.

"We have contracts with them to ensure the information is destroyed or returned to us," she said.

"There is no question of it being sold on to a third party. The financial services we offer are purely voluntary; if our members don't want them, they can simply throw the details away."

She said that Labour receives commission on each policy sold but insisted that the mailshots were random. The first policy, the Personal Accident Plan, is expected to earn the party £20,000.

David Smith, an assistant data protection registrar, said an investigation would be launched if any of Labour's members complained.

"If their details are being passed to a third party, we would expect people to be made aware of that fact and given the opportunity to withhold the information," he said.

"It is something we would certainly look into if it were raised with us."

The plan provides a scale of payments for personal injuries ranging from a fractured hip at £3,000, £240 for second or third degree burns to "4.5 per cent or more of body surface" and £900 for internal injuries. The maximum payout for injuries sustained in any single accident is £5,000.

Labour members interested in joining the scheme are asked to call Irene Wolfenden (at UNAT Direct) on 0181 680 7194. Those who apply before 15 September will receive a free digital alarm clock.

Choice of French seaweed puts locals in a laver

By Alexandra Williams

Selling French seaweed in Swansea has a coals-to-Newcastle ring about it. But, a supermarket chain has dared to do just that.

Punnett of the freshly harvested seaweed went on sale at 220 Tesco stores this week. But rather than selecting seaweed from Swansea and Gower, as Harrods does, Tesco has cast its net across the English Channel. It has started importing up to 40 tonnes a week of rock-salted seaweed from the Brittany coast at Roscoff.

In South Wales and North Devon, where seaweed is one of the staples of the local diet, the foreign delicacy is likely to remain firmly on the shelves.

Tom Evans, a tourist officer in Barnstaple, Devon, and a connoisseur of the local plantlife, said: "I can't imagine a French variety selling here for one minute. It's a pity Tesco has had to go abroad. We wouldn't mind them using our laver so long as there's enough for us and the Canada Geese."

Elizabeth Williams, who runs Gower Coast Seafoods, in Crofty, and sells 500kg of laver each week, said: "They will not get anything better than we have got. It's ridiculous. We've got the quality and quantity."

Seaweed is a particularly rich source of iodine, minerals and vitamins and contains as much iron in an ounce as spinach does in over 6lb. It also contains proteins, carbohydrates, carotene and fibre. Mr Evans said: "If you eat it warmed for breakfast with bacon and an egg on top it keeps you going all day."

Tesco is stocking two varieties – sea lettuce and dulse, both recommended for an extra kick in dishes ranging from pasta and chicken to scrambled egg. It can be eaten raw or cooked but needs rinsing at least three times to remove salt and sand.

Kelly Murphy, spokeswoman for Tesco, said: "At the time we were sourcing seaweed there was no British supplier who could supply the quantity and quality we wanted. But we are open to offers in this country."

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Turn to page 17.

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inside north korea

Soldiers watch aloof as children walk the streets weak with hunger



Haves and have nots: Soldiers of the People's Army keep close watch on Red Cross food aid, while underfed children stroll in the shadow of the 'Great Leader'

Stephen Vines reports on the silent famine that officially doesn't exist

Pyongyang — small North Korean boy on a railway platform, with legs so thin they looked as if they would snap, suddenly faints, almost certainly from hunger. Although surrounded by people, no one takes any notice until they observe a foreigner watching. The featherweight, inert body is quickly scooped up by one of the ubiquitous soldiers and deposited unceremoniously behind a bush. The soldiers stand in front, obscuring the view.

This scene sums up the bizarre and gruesome situation in North Korea today. Hunger and disease are so commonplace that they are hardly subjects for concern. Yet, the ruling Communists are loath to allow outsiders see what is happening as a consequence of their disastrous policies.

Nevertheless the disaster is so all encompassing that the regime which allegedly follows the late dictator Kim Il Sung's "Juche Idea" of self reliance has been forced to seek outside help. As a result, the World Food Programme is now distributing more food in Korea than anywhere else in the world. Around a quarter of the population, including all children under seven, are fed by international agencies.

The economy has ground to a virtual halt. An estimated 80 per cent of industry has fallen into disuse. The rest, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is "very simple and basic".

Asked to give details of shortages North Korea suffers, a government official says simply: "Everything".

Even in the capital Pyongyang, which has been sheltered from the worst ravages, the population shuffles around the streets in threadbare clothing. Food stores are empty, aside from bottles of water, some soya sauce and, occasionally, some dubious-looking tins of canned food. Even the showpiece underground railway system has descended into gloom, as there is not enough power to create more than a trickle of light in the rundown carriages.

In the streets, some people carry knapsacks containing their last items of value, which might be bartered for food, shoes or another necessity.

Everyday the citizens of Pyongyang dutifully report to their offices and factories. They attend air raid drills and propaganda sessions where the endless slogans of the Great Leader Kim Il Sung, are screeched out, but there is no work for them to do, no power to turn on the machines, no supplies to turn into goods.

Only the bureaucrats are occupied, pushing grey pieces of paper from desk to desk. One day a week, office and factory workers are sent to the fields in the hope that throwing manpower at the problem of food shortage will somehow overcome it.

The food ration in Pyongyang is about 400 grams of food per day, outside it is as low as 100 grams, about enough for a bowl of rice or maize per person per day.

A slow seven-hour train journey from the capital to the Chinese border offers a panorama of a country receding into the kind of dire poverty normally seen during a civil war. Buildings are crumbling, while the rolling stock littering the side of the tracks is rusted or covered in weeds.

Most people are abnormally thin, though not skeletal. Only

ambassador emerged in a distressed state from visiting an orphanage where the children were little more than skin and bones. The North Koreans, however, were appalled when an aid agency, trying to raise money, published pictures of severely malnourished children.

"They don't want to admit to the world that their people are starving," says Watt Santatwat, World Vision's vice president for the Asia-Pacific region. "It's against the very nature of their culture to admit they need help."

His colleague Dave Toyce, who heads the Canadian section of the organisation, says North Korea "is facing the question of whether you are going to save face or save lives".

After more than two years of unusually bad floods and droughts, the question remains unanswered. At the beginning of the week the biggest ever delegation of US Congressmen visited the country to be told that aid would not be bartered for changes to the system.

"They refuse to abandon their centralised political and economic systems," said a US official.

The Koreans are uncomfortable with the modest influx of foreigners asking questions, most of which their officials cannot or will not answer. And some matters cannot be questioned. Power is, found to keep the exhibition of gifts to the Great and Dear Leaders (Kim Il Sung and his son Kim Jong Il) properly chilled.

The party elite need not worry about hunger. They flash through the streets of the capital in sparkling German and Japanese cars, secure in the knowledge that they are their families will be well cared for.

At the Kim Song Ju creche in Pyongyang the children of the party elite provide a showcase for visitors. Comfortable in the kind of air-conditioned surroundings which do not extend to ordinary hospitals, the 400 children enjoy use of a lavishly equipped playground, exercise room and plastic paradise of animals and plants, described by Pak Ryon Sil, the deputy head of the creche, as a "nature room".

Clearly used to the attention, the well-fed children put on performances for visitors. Most involve chanting or signing the praises of the Great Leader, or the Dear Leader. Dressed as if they are about to go a Western middle-class children's party in the 1950s they put on their little songs. On closer examination it turns out that the lips of both boys and girls have been smeared with lipstick.

But crude reality has a habit of poking its nose in when least expected. The Workers' Party newspaper, the *Rodong Sinmun*, told its readers last week that they were facing the "Third Arduous March". The newspaper compared this march to the first, which took place during the struggle against Korea's Japanese colonisers and the

second, in the aftermath of the 1950-53 Korean War, when the ruling party in the now divided Korea was purged of "reactionaries and splittists".

The people are urged to go the countryside to cut down weeds and make compost, under the rallying slogan of "The pile of compost is a pile of rice". Under the guidance of the party, they are assured, "the last

charge of the arduous march" will result in victory.

To foreign eyes the bilge churned out by the propaganda machine seems pathetic and unbelievable, yet there is no outward sign that the regime is facing a challenge. Even stories of marauding peasants roaming the country looking for food are wide of the mark, says Mr Scholl, who points out that

all movement is under strict control.

He says the regime insists it needs only two years of normal weather and everything will be fine.

Fundamental economic reforms are required, though there are few signs of any taking place. One of the few foreigners in Pyongyang who expresses any optimism is Keith Chiddy, a

Briton who runs one of the only two Western financial institutions in the country, the ING Bank.

"This is a more sophisticated country than you realise," he says. "They are still doing business, there is no corruption and there is money here."

The smallest hints of reform are seen in the street markets where farmers sell food from

their private lots. State corporations are encouraged to compete with one another.

It is impossible to believe these moves could solve the crisis. The North Koreans seem to possess a peculiar ability to endure the most adverse conditions. This endurance will be put to even more arduous test in coming months.

■ This is the first of a three-part series by Stephen Vines, reporting from Communist North Korea.

The party elite do not need to worry about hunger. They know their families will be well cared for

the soldiers, with stubby semi-automatic rifles hanging off their shoulders, seem to have clothes in good condition.

The obsessive secrecy which is part of everyday life in North Korea, is reinforced by fear that the world will see just how bad things are in the state where, according to Kim Il Sung, "the sun is more glorious".

"These people are great at building Potemkin villages", said a senior official working for an international aid agency, referring to the phony villages erected in Russia to please the eye of Catherine the Great.

Willi Scholl, the deputy resident representative of the UNDP in Pyongyang, describes the country as being gripped by "a silent famine".

Yet it cannot be hidden. Although the authorities closely supervise foreigners, they are still able to bring out details which, together, paint a horrifying picture.

In July, the Christian charity World Vision sent Dr Milton Ameyun to measure children in the centres it is running. He found 30 per cent were severely malnourished, while only 15 per cent showed no signs of malnutrition. A West European

Shops in Pyongyang contain only bottles of water and soy sauce. Yet the party elite are not going without: their well-fed children put on performances for visitors while workers are exhorted to go to the countryside to help make compost

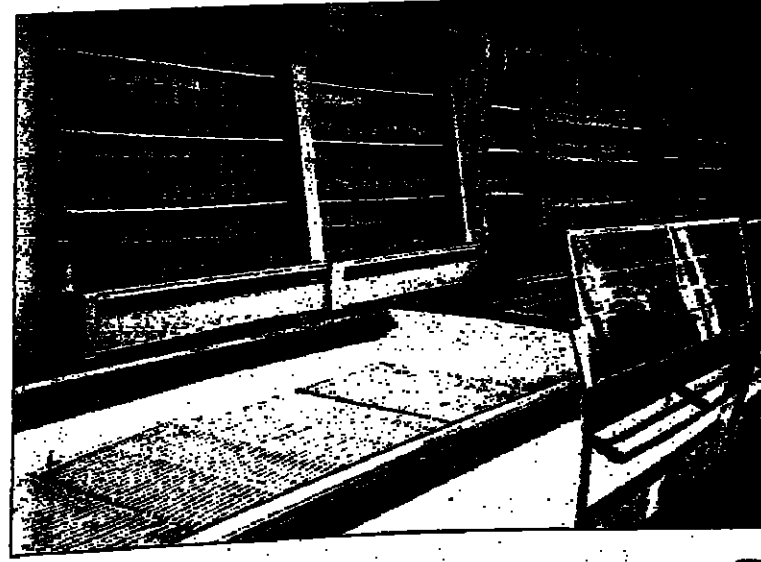
Photographs: Stephen Vines



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turn to page 12

French take up Cook's arms challenge



Lang: Impressed by Tony Blair

Joanna Lee
Paris

Jack Lang, the President of the French Foreign Affairs Committee, is encouraging the new French Socialist government to follow Tony Blair's lead. Inspired by the "humanity and intelligence" of the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, with regard to his policy on arms sales, Mr Lang has written to the French Foreign and Defence Ministers, Hubert Vedrine and Alain

Richard, asking them to do it by the "Cook" book.

On 28 July Mr Cook announced that Britain would stop all arms sales to countries with a poor record on human rights. He also laid down measures for the publication of an annual report on arms exports from Britain and made proposals for a European "code of conduct" on the subject.

The Foreign Secretary has announced his intention to ban the manufacture and sale of all landmines in Britain, as well as

destroying all present stocks. Both he and Mr Blair have supported Diana, Princess of Wales's anti-landmine campaign, which she continued most recently in Bosnia.

In a letter made public on Monday, Mr Lang describes the Cook proposals as "an excellent idea" which was "closely linked to our own convictions". He wants to see the two countries working in close consultation on the issues and believes France ought to adopt similar measures, suggesting two major

changes in the present French policy on arms.

France currently sells arms to countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia, all known for their poor human rights record. Mr Lang urges the new Socialist government to ban all arms exports to such repressive regimes, and to continue sales only to countries which pose no risk to international peace or to the safety of their own citizens. He also recommends that new legislation be passed on

landmines, including the modification of a law passed in 1996 by Alain Juppé's right-wing government. As it now stands, the use of all landmines by the French army. However, they may still be used "in exceptional circumstances for the protection of the French forces". Mr Lang wants this clause scrapped and favours "the complete destruction" of all land mines in France.

In the same vein as Mr Cook's policy on arms export,

which is based on the protection of human rights, Mr Lang emphasises in his letter the need for a foreign policy that incorporates a "new ethical vision and a desire for peace".

Mr Lang said he was "extremely impressed" by Mr Blair's approach, and very optimistic for Britain's future under New Labour, which he feels has a "brand new air about it". He describes Mr Blair as "young and full of enthusiasm" and draws parallels between Britain in 1997 and France in 1981.

when François Mitterrand, France's first Socialist president, came to power after two decades of right-wing rule in an atmosphere of hope and enthusiasm.

There has as yet been no official response to Mr Lang from the French ministers, who are away on holiday. But it is unlikely they will refuse these proposals. Mr Lang is confident the French government will accept them, in accordance with their belief in "social justice".

Leading article, page 13

significant shorts

Arafat guard sentenced to death for spying

A Nablus court convicted three officers from Yasser Arafat's bodyguard unit and a Palestinian construction worker of treason for spying for Israel. Fawzi Sawalha, 23, whom prosecutors said was the ringleader, was sentenced to death; Khaldon Athamneh, 24, was sentenced to life with hard labour and Taher Jamil, 22, was sentenced to 15 years with hard labour. They were arrested by Jihad al-Masami, who Israel accused last month of planning to attack Israeli settlers and soldiers. AP - Nablus

Commonwealth boost

The Commonwealth will decide in October whether to accept three new members. The Secretary-General, Emeika Anyaoku, said Yemen, Rwanda and the Palestine National Authority had applied to join the association of 53 mainly former British colonies. The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Edinburgh will make a final decision. Reuters - Singapore

'Bollywood' producer murdered

Gulshan Kumar, a film producer and music magnate, was shot dead in Bombay and police blamed organised-crime groups. He was shot 16 times as he finished praying at a temple he had built. Mr Kumar's chauffeur and two bystanders were injured; the gunman escaped in a taxi. Mr Kumar, who once made a living selling juice, got his start pirating hit songs from Hindi films. AP - Bombay

Vampire killer gets the lash

A taxi-driver dubbed the "Tehran vampire" has received the first of 900 lashes before his public hanging today for the kidnap, rape and murder of nine girls and women. Gholamreza Khosrou Kouran Kordieh was called "the vampire" because he struck at night. Reuters - Tehran

Turtle coup

A "killer" turtle terrorising the Main river was detained after a seven-year rampage. The 55lb reptile, an alligator turtle, was netted by fishermen and taken to a zoo. It fed on ducks, fish and animal carcasses; where it came from is a mystery. Reuters - Frankfurt



Image problem: The British artist Andrew Vicari at his home in Monaco with paintings he has done of members of the Saudi Arabian royal family. The Iranian government has offered to buy the works, apparently to destroy them, on the grounds that Islam forbids figurative representation. Photograph: AFP

Iran cabinet changes signal a shift in policy

Tehran (Reuters) — Iran's new President, Mohammad Khatami, has proposed a new cabinet that seems to point to a moderation of policy.

Diplomats said the list of 22 ministers indicated compromise on the politically sensitive positions of intelligence, foreign affairs and defence but promised change on domestic issues.

"It points to Khatami pressing for discreet but important changes on the domestic scene, particularly in regard to social policy, while leaving foreign security matters in the hands of his more conservative opponents," said one diplomat.

President Khatami submitted his cabinet choices to the Iranian parliament or Majlis in his first key test in office. His ability to put in place a cabinet of his own choosing is seen as vital to the reforming scope of his four-year administration.

The moderate Shia Muslim clergyman named ambassador to the United Nations Kamal

Kharrazi to take over from Ali Akbar Velavati as foreign affairs minister. Hossein Namazi was chosen for the economy and finance portfolio. Bijan Namdar Zanganeh switched to the oil ministry from energy. Qorbanali Dorri Najafabadi was named to head intelligence, and navy chief Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani to defence.

One diplomat said the nominations for the three central posts of foreign affairs, intelligence and defence would be accepted quickly by parliament's hardliners: "Each of them stands for the status quo, promising little change in the short term."

Mr Kharrazi is seen as a loyal technocrat who would be unlikely to initiate major changes in foreign policy, particularly in Iran's hostile relations with the United States or the European Union.

He was in charge of war propaganda during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. If confirmed, he would step into the shoes of Mr

Velavati, a soft-spoken paediatrician who has been the voice of the Islamic republic in world capitals since December 1981. The nomination of Mr Namdar Zanganeh, a conservative cleric and parliamentary deputy at intelligence, was another important concession by the moderate president to his hardline opponents.

Changes were expected from President Khatami's nominees at domestic ministries, however, particularly with the potentially controversial choice of Ataollah Mohajerani as minister of culture and Islamic guidance. Mr Mohajerani has faced increasing criticism from conservatives, being labelled as a "liberal" after he advocated direct talks with the arch-enemy the US in 1990 and pressed for more cultural freedoms.

"Khatami has sent a signal that he will honour his election mandate of bringing social justice and civil law," said a Western diplomat, who expected

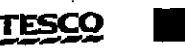
the parliament to challenge Mr Mohajerani's position.

Abdollah Nouri, nominated for the interior ministry, held the same post between 1990-1994. He is noted as a member of a left-wing clerical association. "He is a reformist who will work like a bulldozer. He will bring changes to most of the provincial governors and mayors and will have a crucial role in the next parliamentary elections," the diplomat said.

Three of the 22 ministers proposed retained portfolios they held under former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. They are Issa Kalantari at Agriculture, Hossein Kamali at labour and social affairs, and justice minister Esmail Shoushtari. Two ministers proposed in the new cabinet were also carried over from Rafsanjani's team but were given new portfolios — new oil minister Mr Zanganeh, and Gholamreza Shafiei, who switched to the industry portfolio from cooperatives.

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Gypsies sell up for the good life

Prague (Reuters) — Czech gypsies have flocked to Canadian embassies in Prague and Vienna, hoping to win asylum after a local television report showed a gypsy family living comfortably in Canada while its case for asylum is considered.

Canada's Prague embassy said it had received several hundred calls since the report, mostly from Czech gypsies in the eastern city of Ostrava who mistakenly thought that Canada has a special asylum programme for them.

The Czech news agency CTK said up to 5,000 gypsies had begun selling their possessions in Ostrava and withdrawing money after the report to buy air tickets to Canada.

"The television [TV Nova] basically showed that if you arrive in Canada, from that moment, you get money from the government," Canada's Prague

embassy spokeswoman Lucie Cermakova said. "But in fact it's a very complicated administrative process and you have to fulfil a lot of requirements."

Czech citizens are not required to have a visa to visit Canada though they must show a return ticket when entering and prove they have the means to finance their stay.

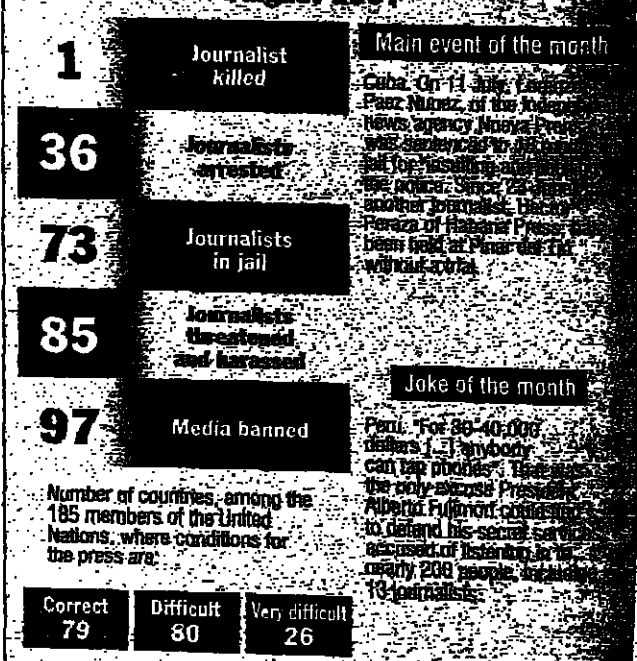
Jacques Beaulne, of Canada's Vienna embassy, stressed that there was no special programme for Czech gypsies.

"Canada is not paradise... We are not going to let people starve, but people are not going to be able to benefit financially from such a situation," Mr Beaulne said.

Human rights campaigners say the Czech Republic unfairly treats its relatively poor gypsies, who are estimated to total hundreds of thousands.

PRESS FREEDOM BAROMETER

REPORTERS SANS FRONTIERES
August 1997



Professor Jürgen Kuczynski

Jürgen Kuczynski was a remarkable member of the remarkable Jewish Central European intelligentsia of the inter-war period. Like many of them he turned to Marxism as an answer to the ethnic and national rivalries, and economic and political chaos which followed the First World War. Many of them subsequently saw Stalin's version of Communism as the God that failed, and returned their Party cards. Kuczynski did not.

Born in 1904, in Elberfeld, Germany, the son of a banker, René Kuczynski, he studied philosophy, finance and statistics at the universities of Berlin, Erlangen and Heidelberg, gaining a doctorate in economics in 1925. Between 1926 and 1929 he extended his theoretical and practical experience in the United States, doing postgraduate studies at the Brookings Institute followed by work as head of the economic department of the American Federation of Labor, the main US trade union body.

Kuczynski joined the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1930 working as economic editor of the paper *Die Rote Fahne* ("The Red Flag") until it was banned by the Nazis in 1933. He remained in Germany until 1936 as part of the Communist underground. He then gained entry into Britain, where he headed the KPD émigré organisation. He also worked with R. Palme Dutt on the Labour Monthly, which, of course, had nothing to do with the Labour Party and was totally on Moscow's line. As with Dutt and other true believers, the Soviet Union was Kuczynski's true homeland, and he did not hesitate to follow his sister Ursula, "Sonja", into espionage activity for Moscow.

It was through Jürgen that the fellow refugee Klaus Fuchs was put in touch with the Soviet military intelligence service (GRU) and started his career as an atom spy. Sonja became Fuchs's GRU controller. Their meetings took place in Banbury, where she lived as a refugee. Meanwhile Jürgen himself was becoming active in the secret world. Between 1944-45 he served in the US army air force with the rank of colonel. His job was as part of a team of

analysts conducting the Strategic Bombing Survey. He passed on the results of his labours to Soviet intelligence.

In 1945 Kuczynski returned to Berlin, living to begin with in the American Sector of the city. He joined the Communist-dominated Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) when it was established in 1946. However, the SED felt his talents could best be used in the various front organisations and in the academic sphere. He was appointed professor at the Humboldt University in 1946, where he founded the Institute for Economic History. He was a founding member of the League of Culture (Kultur Bund) and headed its group in the East German parliament for some years. He served as the President of the Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union, 1947-50, telling his members, "He who hates and despises human progress as it is manifested in the Soviet Union is himself odious and contemptible."

This heavy emphasis on Soviet culture, embracing all aspects of society, was one of the biggest mistakes the Soviet occupation authorities and their German helpers made. Kuczynski claimed later to have been removed from the presidency as part of the Stalinist purge of those in Western exile and Zionists.

Although he had occasional brushes with the SED leadership, he does not appear to have ever been in serious danger unlike some other Jewish Communists. He prospered both under Walter Ulbricht and his successor as head of the SED,



Kuczynski: 'party-line dissident'

Erich Honecker. From 1955 to 1968 he was Director of the Institute for the History of Economic Science of the (East) German Academy of Sciences. In 1964 Ulbricht saw to it that the Humboldt University awarded him an honorary doctorate.

When Honecker replaced Ulbricht as first secretary of the SED in May 1971 Kuczynski became his adviser of external economic affairs. It is impossible to assess to what extent his advice played any part in the decline and fall of the state (GDR) both had helped to create. In the final years of the GDR Kuczynski kept up his intellectual and practical interests. He helped to found a free-thinkers' body in the 1980s.

Many of Kuczynski's admirers will remember him for one or several of many of his publications. He appears to have been a compulsive writer with nearly 4,000 titles attributed to him. His memoirs appeared in 1973 and, 10 years later, *Dialogue with My Great-Grandson*, which attempted a critique of Stalinism. In 1992 he published a somewhat self-mocking volume calling himself "a true party-line dissident". Outside Germany he will be better known for his works on economic history, including his *History of the Working Class under Capitalism* in some 40 volumes. When "the change" came in the GDR in 1989-90 he was ready to side with those who wanted a reformed, but still independent, GDR.

Disappointed by the failure of the reformers to halt the collapse of the Communist system both at home and later in the Soviet Union, Jürgen Kuczynski still found strength to fight on. He joined the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) which superseded the SED. He did, however, acknowledge that in many of his interpretations he had been wrong.

David Childs

Jürgen Kuczynski, historian; born Elberfeld, Germany 19 September 1904; Professor of Economic History, Humboldt University 1946-70 (Emeritus); married Marguerite Steinfeld (deceased); two sons, one daughter; died 6 August 1997.

Herbert de Souza

The emaciated figure on top of the carnival float looked the very opposite of a beauty queen. But as the procession entered the Rio de Janeiro stadium during last year's festival, there was especially loud applause for Herbert de Souza - or "Beto" - as he was popularly known. Beto was already suffering badly from Aids, which has now led to his death at the age of 61.

Beto contracted the virus from contaminated blood supplies he had to take regularly because of his haemophilic condition. That same condition also meant that he almost died at birth in Minas Gerais in 1935, but he survived to go on to study at the local federal university and to embark on an academic career as a sociologist.

Although not a Christian, he was influenced by the radical theology being practised in Brazil in the early 1960s, and himself believed that sociologists should be involved not simply

in the study of society but should attempt to change it. It was in this spirit that he set up the radical left wing Ação Popular, and pressed for revolutionary change in Brazil, one of the most unequal societies in the world.

This kind of activism was highly suspect for the military governments which came to power in Brazil in 1964, and by the end of the decade de Souza, like the current Brazilian president Henrique Cardoso, found himself forced into exile. De Souza went first to Chile, to participate in Salvador Allende's Popular Unity experiment with socialism, but in 1973 once again found the military on his doorstep pressuring him to leave. He took refuge in the Panamanian embassy, and after living in that country, went on to work in Canada, Sweden and France.

He still wanted above all to do "useful" work back in Brazil, and returned as soon as possi-

ble after an amnesty was announced for political exiles at the end of the 1970s. Beto then set up Brazil's first independent social research centre, the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis, which he always adamantly kept free from political and government control. His own position was similarly independent, and although he helped in the creation of new left-wing political parties that sprang up after the return of civilian government in the mid-Eighties, he never committed himself to any of them.

By this time, both Beto and his two brothers, one a famous cartoonist who had lampooned the military government, the other a talented musician, had all been infected with contaminated blood. Beto's brothers died in 1988 of Aids-related illnesses, but Beto seemed to gain new energy. He set up the Brazilian Interdisciplinary Aids Association

to control the health service's blood banks, and started educational campaigns about Aids. At a period when very few public figures were willing to speak about the disease, his courage and honesty were vitally important in forcing the government to adopt measures to combat the growing problem. Beto used the public position these campaigns gave him in a more directly political struggle for ethics in public life when President Fernando Collor de Mello was accused of corruption in 1992. He followed this up by establishing what became known as his "Campaign Against Hunger". Horrified by surveys showing that 32 million Brazilians - almost a quarter of the population - suffered acute hunger, Beto mobilised the middle classes, workers and others to collect food and money for the dispossessed. He said: "I have never found any scientific reason why we can't feed our starving millions

... the problem is that the Brazilian élites don't see the poor. It's a problem of the negation of other people."

The crusade against hunger led to his being proposed as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994. His position was undermined by revelations that, in order to secure finance for the Aids association, he had knowingly taken money from the racketeers running an illegal lottery syndicate in Rio de Janeiro. Beto himself was philosophical about his fall from grace: "The good side was that it demystified my image. Saints don't exist. People take actions that are either right or not, and that's what matters."

Nick Calster

Herbert Jose de Souza, sociologist; born Bocalva, Minas Gerais, Brazil 13 November 1935; married Maria Nakano (two sons); died Rio de Janeiro 9 August 1997.

Alan Charig



Charig: relished controversy

Jurassic Park is the most vivid and recent result of the modern fascination with dinosaurs. But it was the work of such scientists as Alan Charig in the 1970s that started to bring these ancient reptiles out of the laboratory and into wider public awareness, with the help of television and of a new generation of illustrators with talent and imagination.

In 1974, Charig wrote and presented a 10-part BBC television series on the study of vertebrate fossils, *Before the Ark*, and wrote an accompanying book. His second semi-popular book, *A New Look at Dinosaurs* (1979), was an even greater success and was translated into several languages.

Born in 1927, Alan Charig

was educated at Haberdashers' Aske's School in Hampstead and at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. In the midst of his undergraduate study, he was called up to do National Service in the Royal Armoured Corps. After learning to drive a tank, he volunteered to learn Russian, and became an interpreter in the British Army of Occupation in Germany.

After returning to Cambridge and completing his Natural Sciences degree, he became one of the first research students of Rex Parrington FRS at Cambridge. Parrington had collected fossil reptiles in East Africa in the 1930s, and Charig was given the task of studying some early ancestors of the dinosaurs. When he joined the staff of

what is now the Natural History Museum in 1957, he was at first given a post in invertebrate fossils and wrote a paper on a fossil mollusc from Fiji, but he was later (in 1961) transferred to the Department of Vertebrate Palaeontology when a post became vacant there.

This position suited his interest and character very well. His research duties allowed him to study the museum's historic collection of dinosaur fossils. As a zoologist rather than a geologist, he tried to interpret the structural differences between the major groups of dinosaur in functional terms. His interpretation of their differing solutions to the problems of efficiently carrying and moving their great weight remains a major

contribution to this field. He was a meticulous worker; his research papers were always clearly expressed, with the structure of argument plainly laid out, and facts clearly distinguished from interpretation. But his work on dinosaurs at the museum also brought him into contact with the public, which gave him the opportunity to use his ability to explain science clearly in simple terms. He was an excellent and entertaining lecturer, in demand at schools and undergraduate societies, and he gave freely of his time and energy. He was gregarious and garrulous, a strong supporter of such scientific dining groups as the Tetrapods Club, with a fund of stories.

Alan Charig relished con-

troversy. He enjoyed disentangling the various components of a scientific theory, and argued his case robustly but always fairly. This was most clearly seen in the 1980s, when he sprang to the defence of one of the museum's most treasured fossils - the beautiful skeleton of the earliest known bird, *Archaeopteryx*, complete with clear impressions of feathers and wings. A new theory of the origin of life, propounded by the astronomer Fred Hoyle, required that this fossil had to be a forgery. Charig and his colleagues comprehensively demolished this suggestion - though he strongly resented the waste of scholarly time involved in this debate, which gained much media attention.

He was not one of those museum workers who merely study the fossils that others have laboriously collected in the field. He was a member of the four-month-long expedition with members of London University that went to Zambia and Tanzania in 1963 and which collected over five tons of material. He also collected in Lesotho in 1966-67 (when the expedition found the oldest articulated skeleton of a mammal), in Queensland (1978), and China (1982), and visited many fossil sites in Argentina in 1995. Though Charig retired in 1987, he continued to carry out research at the museum, especially on the very unusual dinosaur *Baryonyx*, which had been discovered in a brick-pit

in Surrey by an amateur collector in 1983. This research, carried out jointly with his successor, Angela Milner, was published this summer. It is a fitting memorial to a man who gave generously of his abilities, both within the world of science and in explaining his subject to a wider audience.

Barry Cox

Alan Jack Charig, palaeontologist; born London 1 July 1927; Scientific Officer, Invertebrate Palaeontology, British Museum (Natural History) 1957-61, Curator of Fossil Amphibians, Reptiles and Birds 1961-87, Principal Scientific Officer 1964-87; married 1955 Marianne Jacoby (died 1987; two sons, one daughter); died London 15 July 1997.

BIRTHS

O'NEILL Simon and Marian (née Daly) are delighted to announce the arrival of Eoin Patrick Michael on 6 August 1997, a brother to Hugh.

IN MEMORIAM

HOWARD David. Died 13 August 1995. Dearest son, you can never know how much you are missed by everyone. With our deepest love, Mum and Dad.

Announcements for the Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1

Births, Marriages & Deaths

Canary Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned to 0171-330 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-330 2012) or faxed to 0171-330 2010, and are charged at £5.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays

Miss Sheila Armstrong, soprano, 55; Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Beale, former Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, Central Europe, 68; Mr Fidel Castro, President of Cuba, 70; The Rev Leo Chamberlain, Headmaster, Ampleforth College, 57; Mr Roy Evans, trade union leader, 66; Miss Marie Heibin, photographic model, 45; Mr Ben Hogan, golfer, 85; Mrs Judith Jeffrey, actress and cookery writer, 64; Mr Jeffrey James, High Commissioner to Kenya, 53; Miss Susan Jamson, actress, 54; Sir Thomas

Legg QC, Permanent Secretary, Lord Chamberlain's Department, 62; Sir John Milne, former chairman, Blue Circle Industries and DRG, 73; Lord Oram, former MP, 84; Mr Mack Pypor, Headmaster, Gordonstoun School, 50; Mr Gene Raymond, actor, 89; Lord Sainsbury, joint-president, J. Sainsbury plc, 95; Dr Frederick Sanger, biochemist, 79; Mr Alan Shearer, footballer, 27; Mr George Shearing, pianist, 77.

Anniversaries

Births: James Gillray, caricaturist, 1756; Queen Adelaide, consort of

William IV, 1792; Sir George Grove, engineer and editor, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 1820; William Thomas Best, organist and composer, 1826; Annie Oakley (Phoebe Anne Oakley Moore (Moss)), crack shot, 1860; Sir William Alexander Craigie, lexicographer, 1867; John Nicholson Ireland, composer, 1879; John Logie Baird, television pioneer, 1888; Christopher Richard Wynne Nevison, painter, 1889; Jean-Robert Borotra, tennis-player, 1898; Alfred Joseph Hitchcock, film director, 1899; Felix Wankel, engineer, 1902; Sir Basil Urwin Spence, architect, 1907; Archbishop Makarios III

(Michael Christodoulos Mouskos), Cypriot president, 1913. Deaths: Gerard David (Gheeraert Davit), painter, 1523; Jeremy Taylor, theologian, 1667; René-Théophile Hyacinthe Lacaze, inventor of the stethoscope, 1826; Ferdinand-Victor Eugène Delacroix, painter, 1863; Edward John Trevelyan, traveller and author, 1881; Sir John Everett Millais, painter, 1896; Domenico Morelli, painter, 1901; Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie ("John Oliver Hobbs"), novelist and playwright, 1906; Florence Nightingale, nursing pioneer, 1910; Jules-Emile Frédéric Massenet, composer, 1912; Herbert

George Wells, novelist, 1946; Henry Williamson, novelist, 1977. On this day: the French armies were defeated at Blenheim by the Austrians and English, 1704; earthquakes in Peru and Ecuador destroyed four cities and killed 25,000 people, 1868; Manila in the Philippines was captured by US forces, 1898; Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) was elected president of Turkey, 1923; over 13,000 people died in floods in the Hunan. Human and Kwantung areas of China, 1924; the Central African Republic became independent, 1960; the frontier between East and West Germany was closed after the East Germans scaled

the border, 1961; the last hangings in Britain took place when two men were executed for murder at Liverpool and Manchester, 1968; the last US troops left Vietnam, 1972. Today is the Feast Day of St Basil, St Cassian of Imola, St Hippolytus of Rome, St Maximus the Confessor, St Narses Klaireus, St Pontian, pope, St Regardund, queen, St Simplician of Milan, St Wighert.

Changing of the Guard
The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery mount the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. Singapore's Customs Guard marches the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Coldstream Guards.



Out looking for the lion: Swift emulated American stride pianists such as Willie the Lion Smith but achieved a singular and awe-inspiring accuracy

Photograph: Big Bear

Duncan Swift

The stride pianists were the first jazz musicians to play with sophisticated musical technique and Duncan Swift didn't so much impose himself on a noble tradition as become one of the last in its line.

It is unusual for a British player to achieve the eminence that he did in a field that was dominated by Americans like Fats Waller, Willie the Lion Smith, James P. Johnson and, for the last half-century, by Ralph Sutton. Stride playing, as titles like "Fingerbuster" might suggest, requires such rare skill that its practitioners are few and their work much savoured.

The development of the "stride" style came from the earlier and mechanical sound of ragtime. Stride, much more sophisticated, added that intangible jazz element swing, and was notable for rocking and driving bass figures from the left hand. Because of an early misconception, Swift unwittingly

drove himself to a unique accomplishment.

The original stride pianists recorded on to metal cylinders from which piano rolls were made. Disciples learnt by playing the rolls on a player piano. The production of the original cylinders involved powdering the hammers of the piano. When the pianist played the cylinder revolved and was hit by the hammers, each leaving an accurate powdered mark. Afterwards a hole was drilled on each mark leaving a replica of what had been played. From this the final parchment rolls could be made for distribution.

What Swift and his contemporaries didn't know was that the mechanics who made the cylinders embellished them by drilling in extra holes after wards, thus adding more notes and making an already complex performance potentially impossible to emulate. Somehow Swift managed to overcome this with an awe-inspiring accuracy.

Most of the giant stride players had died by the time Swift was born in 1943. He had a classical training that brought him two diplomas and a degree at the Birmingham School of Music. He began playing jazz early, and by the time he was 14 was already working on jobs with local bands. He joined the Jazz Hounds in Rotherham and then took up trombone so that he could play with Mike Taylor's Jazz Band. He moved with his family to the Midlands in 1960 and played with the trumpeter Jim Simpson's band from 1961 to 1962.

Simpson, later editor of a jazz magazine, a concert promoter and organiser of the Birmingham Jazz Festival, was able to play a potent part in Swift's career. He provided the pianist with a multitude of concert opportunities and, in 1988 and 1991, recorded recitals by him which appeared as compact discs on Simpson's Big Bear label. These, respectively called

Out Looking for the Lion and *The Broadwood Concert*, caused an admiring stir in both the jazz and national press.

After he left Simpson's band, Swift played in the Bill Niles Jazz Band. He kept his jazz career going while teaching music in schools from 1968 until 1978. He formed his own band, the New Delta Jazzmen, in 1974 until, after having worked in the band led by the trumpeter Kenny Ball on many occasions, he finally joined it in 1977 and stayed for six years.

Tired of life on the road, he bought a pub at Bewdley in Worcestershire in 1983 and ran it until 1987, when he returned to music full-time. He joined the Pete Allen band and stayed there until he left in September 1989 to become exclusively a solo pianist. In this role he played at many concerts and festivals, occasionally working as a featured player with Paul Munnelly's Harlem and with the Harlem Hot Five. Surgery on

his back forced him away from music for a year from 1990 to late 1991.

He made a rare appearance on trombone with King Pleasure's band and from December 1993, despite declining health, he was featured in touring shows with the John Patters band. He introduced his own compact disc label to issue his final album in 1993 under the title *The Key of D is Daffodil Yellow*. It was a skilled mixture of original tunes and standards with some of his notable interpretations of the music of Fats Waller and Jelly Roll Morton.

His eloquent and spectacular playing led to his being much featured in the various media and he made about 70 radio and 130 television broadcasts.

Steve Voece

Duncan Swift, pianist; born Rotherham, Yorkshire 21 February 1943; married (one daughter); died Bewdley, Worcestershire 8 August 1997.



"Saints don't exist": 'Beto' in Rio

Photograph: Christopher Pillitz / Network

Haute couture for sleepy heads

From Ralph Lauren to Caroline Charles, the design world has come out from under the duvet. Tamsin Blanchard reports on what all the best dressed beds are wearing – and you can bet your bolster it isn't poly-cotton

When the aspirational lifestyle and fashion magazine, *Wallpaper**, was bought by Time Inc in June, it was a sure sign that designer labels have gone beyond the shirts on our backs to the sheets on our beds. Wearing the clothes is not enough any more; serious fashion consumers are investing in the look of the season for their homes as well. Who said the designer crazed Eighties were dead?

Clothes, glasses, chairs, or duvet covers: if there is a market for it, someone somewhere will license a fashion name to design it. John Rocha launches his first range of glasses and bowls for Waterford Crystal in the autumn and British label Ghost has just begun selling quilts and pillows in any colour you like to match your favourite Ghost dress. Anybody who thinks fashion is confined to shirts, socks and underwear is very much mistaken. As the asterisk denotes in the *Wallpaper** logo, fashion is the stuff that surrounds you. You can even buy the Ralph Lauren or Donna Karan CD and listen to compilations of the sounds of your favourite fashion guru.

It was Ralph Lauren who first exploited the homewares and bed linen market. He launched what the company describes as "an all encompassing programme for the home" in 1983. Two years ago, he added the Ralph Lauren Paint Collection. Now, not only are his sheets and pillowcases sold successfully around the world, so too are his wall papers, floor coverings, furniture, bath towels, dinnerware and napkin rings. In sympathy with his fashion collections, the homewares ranges have had themes ranging from safari, Santa Fe, and of course New and Old England. The highland family mansion is a favourite hunting ground for Mr Lauren, who takes his whole lifestyle concept from his own homes to his shop fittings.

For the Ralph Lauren bed, there are bed pillows (the only shape of pillow to be seen sleeping on is square), duvet covers, blankets, nightspreads and covered quilts. He even sells the bed to put it all on. And this is not just a big PR and marketing exercise. Ralph's homewares really do sell. And just like his clothing collections, there is a new look each season. For this autumn, every fashionable bed should be wearing "shearling upholstery and hearty knit woollens". It should have blankets with cream, oatmeal and brown geometric patterns, cable knit blankets, and on top of all that, in case it gets cold in the night, it should have a distressed shearling throw. It's not a bed, it's a whole winter wardrobe.

Following the instant success of Ralph Lauren's home collection, bed linen manufacturers spent much of the eighties looking for designers who could capture a similar market. One such name was Caroline Charles who was approached eight years ago to design her own range of linens which now sells around the world.

"I like being in bed so much, I have real trouble getting out of it," says Ms Charles. "I have my breakfast there and do lots of work there at the weekends." Her ideal bed has to be white and tranquil or "jolly, like



Photographer: Donna Francesca
Stylist: Sophia Neophitou
Hair: Adam Bryant for Toni and Guy
Make-up: Emma Kotch
Model: Caroline de Maigret at Take Two
Stylist assistant: Holly Davies

a gypsy caravan". Right now, her bed is sporting her new paisley duvet cover with big fluffy pillows – square of course. "I think people in Britain spoil themselves on their beds more than they do on their clothes," she says. "They know they're going to have their bed linen for a long time."

The men's shirt label Gallagher has also seen a niche in the market and has brought out a single contemporary design of bed linen in Damien Hirst-style multi-coloured spots. It is available by mail order only and seems a logical move for a label known for its quality cotton shirts to make.

Other designers who have gone into bed linen include Kenzo, Christian Dior, Missoni, Christian Lacroix, Calvin Klein – whose zen-like sheets and pillowcases are coming to the UK soon – and Versace. At the Versace shop on Bond Street, there is a class of clientele who will spend up to £20,000 a go on their bed linens and accessories. A duvet alone from the Home Signature collection will set you back £1,900. For that price, it will boast the finely printed baroque Versace pattern with no expenses spared. It is a couture duvet.

Heena Keegel, the shop's manager, says the majority of Versace homeware buyers are Arab, Japanese, German or Dutch. They are the sort of people who are loyal to the brand to the end from their underwear to the cup they drink their Earl Grey tea out of. Ms Keegel offers an interior design service to serious clients and will help them co-ordinate their entire bedroom if they will let her. She will even try and sell you a bed, a sup at £9,000 a go. "It's a whole bed," she stresses. "Very solid, on a baroque velvet base and made of beech wood." For younger, slightly less affluent customers, Versace has just launched the new Home Jeans collection, starting at £185 for a sheet. The feel is not quite so overpoweringly Versace – there are polka dots and ivy leaf prints.

How you dress your bed is a serious matter for those in the know. "I think the rule is never poly-cotton, never, never in your life," instructs Hilary Robertson, an interiors stylist who works for magazines like *Country Homes & Interiors*. She has a thing about bed linen, although she says you don't have to spend hundreds of pounds for your bed to be in vogue. Her idea of a perfect bed is a mix 'n' match affair with clashing colours, stripes and florals. Her recent find was a patchwork duvet made by a stall holder in Spitalfields Market who sells fifties dresses and uses any dresses that are past their prime to patch into quilts. White is far too boring. "You have to have square pillows – they make the bed look better. The best ones are at The Source on Kensington High Street [in London]. At the moment, I'm in time green summer mode, but I'm looking forward to winceyette candy stripes available from old fashioned draper's stores in the winter."

Simon Wilson, half of Butler & Wilson, the jewellers, also considers his bed linen to be so important he has to employ a cleaner to iron it, while Gay Mill of the Design Net, an interiors consultancy, bought her first designer sheets from The Conran Shop by Cerruti for £200 in 1988 and is still sleeping in them. "They're



Egyptian cotton and are a dream to sleep in," she says. She also sells her own label sheets in 100 per cent untreated calico which is like linen but doesn't crease as much and doesn't require a home help every time you want to wash them. Her other favourite designer sheets are by Kenzo in blue and white.

Meanwhile, back at *Wallpaper** HQ, Suzy Hoodless, Interiors Editor, has not quite got over the number of calls the magazine got with enquiries about some embroidered lacy sheets by Tocca, featured last spring. Those sheets, as slept in by Helena Christensen no less, have taken on near mythical status. I am told they can be ordered through Browns of South Molton Street, which was the first shop to sell the New York label's hip, lacy dresses a few years ago. Browns have been inundated with requests and tell me they are only available at the moment from a shop in Tokyo. I wouldn't be surprised if some desperate designer bed

linen victim hasn't booked a flight and made the trip to the Far East in search of them.

"People don't just want their wardrobes to be in fashion that season," Ms Hoodless says. "They want their homes to be too. Eventually there will be summer and winter trends for bed linen just as for clothes. There's a definite market for it." Her tip for the ultimate in bed linen is by a French designer, Catherine Meunier, sold exclusively through Selfridges. At £900 for a single throw, however, these are sheets with limited appeal. Hoodless herself confesses to merely lusting after the sheets and her own bed is dressed by Habitat, all in white appliqué sheets.

So who on earth can afford such prices? "It's people that have jobs in the city, who don't have kids yet. They've got the car, the job, the great pay packet, and they want the whole look." With sheets like those, it's a wonder they manage to get out of bed in the morning.

Above: white double duvet cover with multi-colour dot, with pillowcase set, £65, by Gallagher, inquiries 0271-431 8880; grey chiffon dress with matching knickers, from a selection by Gianni Versace, 34 Old Bond St, London W1. Left from top: white double duvet cover with orange rose print, £48, Ilac pillowcase, £25, both by Bedstock, 281 Portobello Rd, London W10; peach slip, £295, by Stella McCartney, from Browns Focus, 38 South Molton St, London W1. Blue silk print king-size duvet, £1,900, by Gianni Versace, as before; blue slip dress, £125, by Dosa, from Browns, 23-27 South Molton St, London W1. Multi-coloured stripe blanket, £188, by Missoni (details below); purple cotton trousers with sequins, £700; matching top, £785, both by Missoni, from Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London SW1. Lisa Stirling, 3-4 St James House, St James St, Manchester

Splashing out on sleep – where to buy designer bedding

The Design Net, phone orders only, 0171 639 4950, complete set of natural calico bedwear costs £79, includes king-size duvet cover, one sheet and four pillowcases.

Ralph Lauren Home Collection, from Harvey Nichols, Selfridges and Harrods, enquiries 0171 495 5499, sheets, pillowcases and duvet covers from £35, throw cushions from £59.

Kenzo, double duvet cover £129, pillowcases £19.95 from Harrods, SW1.

Christian Dior, "sleep-inducing" patterned duvet covers from £149, pillowcases, £34.95, (no matching sheets), Harrods.

Christian Lacroix, double duvet, £139, flat sheet, £89.95, pillowcases, £49.95 from Harrods, as before.

Designer's Guild, 267-271 and 277 King's Road, London SW3. Printed Oxford



pillow case from £15, flat sheets from £46, double duvet covers from £65. Call 0171 243 7300 for stockist enquiries.

Ghost, 36 Ledbury Road, London W10, bed throws, from £300-£450 and large cushions, £90; enquiries on 0171 229 1057.

Caroline Charles, (pictured left, below) printed double duvet, £79, pillowcases from £14.95, flat sheets from £45, available from Harrods and Caroline Charles.

Yves Saint Laurent, solid colour block print double duvet covers, from £139, pillowcases from £49.95, flat sheets from £99.95 available from Harrods, as before.

J&M Davidson, 62 Ledbury Road, enquiries 0171 243 2089, double duvet, £75, king-size duvet, £165.

Missoni, (as pictured in main feature and left, above), Liberty, Regent Street, W1.

You're looking divine today, Father...

The Church is updating its image for a special occasion with the help of luminaries from the fashion world, writes Ian Phillips

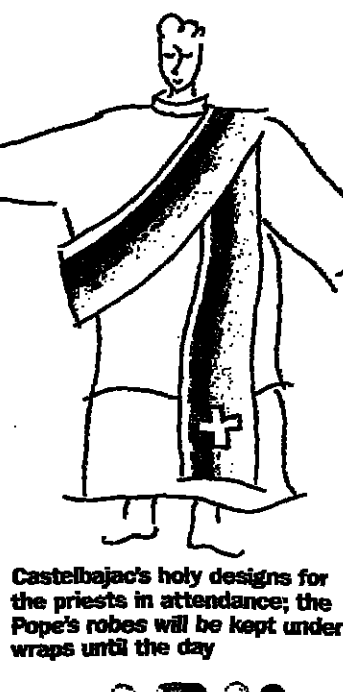
In the Seventies, French fashion designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac created clothes for Charlie's Angels. For years angels of the winged, celestial variety have also been very present in his work. They often turn up on outfits in his collections or on the furniture he designs and he regularly draws them in chalk on the walls of Paris. Now, instead of putting religious icons on clothes, he is designing clothes for a religious icon – the Pope. From August 18th to 24th, 400,000 young Catholics, 5,000 priests and 500 bishops will gather in Paris for International Youth Week. The highlight of this celebration of faith will be a mass held on Longchamp Racecourse during which John-Paul II will baptise 10 young Christians (two from each continent). The scenery for the event has been created by leading architects Christian de Portzamparc and Jean-Michel Wilmette; the music will be orchestrated by the former head of the Paris Opera, Myung



Wha-Chung; the objects for the Communion are the brainchild of designer Sylvain Dubuisson; and the liturgical vestments for all the clergy, including the Pope, have been designed by Castelbajac.

A spokesperson for the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, says Castelbajac was chosen because: "He knows how to make things which are at the same time classical and young. He is also a quite extraordinary colourist and structures clothes with originality, but without extravagance. You couldn't imagine the Pope dressed like a cosmonaut or an erotic dancer, which other designers may have tended to do."

Castelbajac is also manifestly religious. In his design studio's reception is a chair with an angel wearing a pink sweater on it. There is a cut-out angel in prayer on the wall, and in his office there is an oil painting of a monk, an icon of the Virgin and Child and a teddy bear



Castelbajac's holy designs for the priests in attendance; the Pope's robes will be kept under wraps until the day

with angel wings.

Downstairs in the studio, the vestments are being made. An employee is trying on one of the simple white capes which Castelbajac has designed for those who will be baptised. It will be placed over a black cape after the baptism to symbolise the passage from the dark to the light. The chasubles for the priests and bishops are hanging on rails.

Each is made from undyed wool gaberdine. Those for the priests have a single band of colour and an open black cross inscribed on them, while the bishops' garments bear a rainbow-coloured scarf and a white cross.

The Pope's own clothes are, however, being kept firmly under wraps until the big day. What Castelbajac does reveal is that they will be "very simple" and in a "very clear, luminous, intense white. The colour will be much more in little touches – like a constellation." Beads have been sewn on by ace embroiderer François Lesage, whose clients are



more habitually the Chanel and Dior haute couture studios.

It is not the first time Castelbajac has been asked to design for the Church. Eight years ago he created multi-coloured vestments for prison chaplains and claimed that religion has always influenced his fashion. "I have used the same minimalist T-shape as liturgical clothing for 30 years. And the inspiration of the colours of stained-glass windows has been very important to me," he says.

"Fashion being a universal language today, I think it's good that the Church uses it for its message of faith," he adds and says he believes that the present venture could mark the renaissance of a collaboration between artists and the Church.

The Church seems to agree. "We hope this will give other designers the desire to come up with their own propositions for religious clothing," says the Archbishop of Paris' office. Mmmm

Students should not pay dearly for a gap year

Mind the gap. The Government has got itself into a stew over students who had planned to take a year off between receiving their A-level results this week and starting their university courses. Their numbers may be relatively small but their plight is real. Either ministers were badly advised or they, their special advisers and civil servants forgot that the announcement that tuition fees were payable from 1998 would scare thousands of students and give many of them an incentive to start their degrees this autumn – so putting additional strain on a “clearing” system already under severe pressure of numbers.

Making students and their relatives frantic is bad politics. Labour has now made the situation worse by an ill-considered hint that students doing certain ill-defined voluntary activities during their gap year would be exempt from tuition charges next year. That these were likely to be students who could most easily afford the new tuition fees and maintenance seems to have escaped Labour's class-attuned antennae. Matters need to be clarified. This will be a test of the mettle of shop-holding minister Tessa Blackstone.

There is, it's true, a silver lining in these clouds. Ministers and university tutors, employers, parents, let alone students themselves have been given an opportunity to think further about the boundary between school or college

and higher education. In an ideal world the Government would tomorrow welcome the chance it has been given to reflect and promise to disclose new thoughts in the autumn white paper on lifelong learning.

The point, surely, is that the very idea of a “gap” is meaningless in the context of lifelong learning. For several years now it has no longer been the case that all university students are callow eighteen-somethings who will leave at 21 and start jobs. The university undergraduate population is increasingly diverse. More than half of all undergraduates are classified as “mature”. Indeed one of the rationales for the inquiry led by Sir Ron Dearing was the inequity in the way the system treats full-time “young” undergraduates on the one hand and, on the other, the part-timers (paying their own way through thick and thin) and older full-timers who may or may not qualify for the treatment given their younger contemporaries.

Lifelong learning, as per Dearing, is about universities turning themselves into an educational resource throughout the post-18 span of life, their doors open to adults as well as teenagers, their first-degree students taking several years to complete a degree. (The introduction of credit-based learning along American lines is long overdue, though it will require a revolutionary change in behaviour in certain institutions.) After a first degree, students (the word

becoming synonymous in the 21st century with employees) then return for top-up and short courses, replenishing the stock of intellectual capital.

In that perspective, many years are “gap” years. For some, perhaps many, 18-year-olds, a spell of employment after school or sixth form or further education college might be very useful. Many more would contemplate it, provided the financial help was the same for them as it would have been if they had gone straight on.

This is the great opportunity in the Dearing proposals as amended by David Blunkett: a system of loans for

student maintenance makes such a vision entirely realisable. The Government's position on tuition fees is still, however, couched in terms of a university population of 18-year olds. Mature students and those entering later would be penalised under any regime which assessed their means on the same basis as a teenager with no personal resources.

All that is for the future. What ought ministers to do now to prevent this summer storm growing into a political tempest? The first requirement is that Baroness Blackstone stop digging. That suggestion (official? kite-

flying?) of exemption for students accepted on university courses starting in autumn 1998 who in the intervening period had done good works for the Prince's Trust or Voluntary Service Overseas was misbegotten. The last thing Third World countries need are skill-less young people playing the volunteer dilettante for three months. It is a moot point whether the life chances of inner-city youth would be enhanced by student types working for the Prince's Trust for a couple of months.

The catchment for these two bodies, and other worthy enterprises such as Community Service Volunteers, is necessarily from among students who can afford to do charity work. Are they really the most deserving objects of a Labour government's charity? And how complicated it would be to sort the volunteering goats from the others.

The thousands of students caught between a rock and a university place need the Government to come clean. There is a strong case in natural justice that the 19,000 or so students accepted for 1998 were accepted on existing financial terms and should be allowed to matriculate on 1997's conditions. This, it is true, does penalise those 1997 A-level candidates who decided to defer application but their case for exemption from the planned changes is much less strong.

Inadequate as Sir Ron Dearing's report was in some respects, it has

pushed Labour into taking the right decision about higher education. To go straight ahead with the new fees regime was right, too. But ministers should have reckoned for what the Americans call “grandfathering” – the effects of a new scheme on those embroiled in existing arrangements. Fairness demands complete exemption for those with places who were planning a year out.

Of armes and booby traps

Licking his wounds, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, can take comfort today from the news that the French want to emulate his statement of ethical intent in foreign policy and arms sales. A French foreign policy is proposed that puts human rights and ethical consistency before *gloire* and *la France éternelle*. At this stage it is only a suggestion and from the maverick minister Jack Lang at that. They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The trouble is Mr Lang went on to compare Tony Blair with François Mitterrand, circa 1981, “young and full of enthusiasm”. It is not an analogy Mr Blair and his ministers should relish. Though Mr Mitterrand stayed in power for 14 years, his ministers soon got the boot and were replaced by the right wing.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

South Bank's monsters in a glass tent

Sir: The imminent release of Lottery funding for the implementation of Lord Rogers' proposals for the South Bank must bring them a big step nearer, yet there has been very little public debate about the issues involved. It is generally assumed that the design is masterly, because it comes from the same hand as the Pompidou Centre in Paris, but this is a misperception, based on the promise that the existing buildings, which nobody much likes, can be rendered invisible and at the same time preserved by putting them in an air-conditioned tent. If the existing buildings are unfriendly in the open they are going to be surly monsters indeed when confined.

The model displayed in the Royal Festival Hall is pernicious because it is entirely made of plastic and is totally transparent: the only things solid are the tiny figures representing people. It thus conveys to the unsophisticated viewer an illusion of being made free by space. The Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Hayward Gallery seem to be part of a total fairground, not solid lumps interrupting the space. And a glass tent is one of those ideas that look masterly in the plastic model, but mean something else entirely once built, when problems of environmental control, energy conservation and simple cleaning thrust themselves forward.

The proposal's effect on the Royal Festival Hall is disastrous. It becomes largely confined and entangled in the skirts of the glass tent. The views from its terraces are spoiled, its relation to the river front is compromised, and questions are raised about public freedom of access. Rogers showed mastery when he placed the Pompidou Centre into Paris, relating it to the street pattern and giving it a spacious plaza. Here, his tent invades the Festival Hall's civic space and crowds it out.

The glass tent is one of those populist ideas that has become another cliché. There is a place for it, but not here, not at the centre of London. The proposal is part of an expressionism that seeks to liberate the architect's gesture, so that he can be as “radical” as the artist. But architecture cannot ignore the city in which it finds its place.

The Festival Hall was never radical, but has always been popular, because it epitomised the egalitarian spirit of the post-war Labour government. In the post-war years it stood for modernity and, as Sir Hugh Casson hoped, it made modernity lovable. As a Grade I listed building it is entitled to more consideration than is here allowed it. As a people's palace, it is entitled to the respect of a government of the people.

It is to be hoped that Lambeth council will know where its duty lies, by rejecting Lord Rogers' proposal.

ROBERT MAXWELL
London NW3
The writer is Emeritus Professor of Architecture, Princeton University

National shame

Sir: Was I alone in thinking that your headline “Tests for sloppy English halted” (12 August) would have been more appropriate in the sports section?

JOHN GODWIN
Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

‘Helmets off’ reveals more relaxed Ulster



A step forward against sex abuse

Sir: The Home Office guidance on the sex offenders register (report, 12 August) allows the police to let certain people know about convicted paedophiles living in their area – but only in exceptional circumstances and as long as they do so with the utmost care. Parents, and the general public, will want to know whether their children will be safer as a result.

The NSPCC sees this as an important step forward. It will send out the message to sex offenders that they can no longer act with impunity and the register should become increasingly effective over the years.

At present, it is undeniably limited. Presumably, the police will be disclosing information on but a small proportion of the 6,000 convicted child sex offenders currently in prison or under supervision. Not on the register are the 100,000 or so men who have previous convictions for child sex abuse but have now been released, let alone the hundreds of thousands of offenders with no convictions.

Much more needs to be done to provide an effective defence for our children. We need to improve the supervision of child sex offenders following release from prison. We need to make it illegal for paedophiles to seek work with children and improve the vetting system for people applying for such work. We need to set up better systems to investigate individuals or networks who abuse lots of children. We need to ensure that all individuals who have abused children are successfully prosecuted.

Protecting children from paedophiles is always going to be a game of cat and mouse. But now the cats have bigger claws and the mice have fewer holes in which to hide. If just one child is protected by this new measure, that is a success.

MIKE TAYLOR
Director of Children's Services
The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
London EC2

Academic haven in Hong Kong

Sir: Paul Taylor reports Simon Gray as saying, of his late brother, Piers, that “it was the boredom, boredom, boredom” of academic life in Hong Kong and a freak-filled common room to which only Dickens could do justice” that drove him to despair and to the bottle (“Intensive care”, 5 August).

I was a colleague and close friend of Piers for nearly 20 years in Hong Kong. I believe that his brother's remarks misrepresent academic life in Hong Kong. In my 20 years in Hong Kong with Piers, we had many academic visitors from Britain. Two reactions were expressed so frequently that they became almost commonplace: (i) how pleasant it was, after the compartmentalisation of British universities, to visit the common room at the University of Hong Kong, and find oneself, as say, a lecturer in English literature, talking to lawyers, philosophers,

engineers, medics, chemists and marine zoologists.

(ii) how much more stimulating it was to be part of Hong Kong life – academic and otherwise – than to be stuck, as many were, for 25 years in British provincial universities.

The senior common room at the University of Hong Kong provided one of the most comfortable academic havens in the world. Teaching in Hong Kong was a joy; the engagement of the students (and I taught analytic philosophy) was humbling. Piers Gray spent much of his time in the last three or so years of his life setting up a programme in American Studies. It was not Hong Kong that caused his so much regretted and untimely death.

D A GRIFFITHS
Woodbury, Devon

A way out of the drugs dilemma

Sir: There is a problem with legalising drugs: that it would convey the message that they are harmless (Letters, 12 August).

There is a problem with not legalising them: that the law seems to many people irrational and is widely disregarded. The solution is to create a third category: tolerated substances, neither illegal nor ignored by the law, which would include tobacco and alcohol. Their sale should be subject to stringent conditions: no advertising; health warnings; police powers to check for dangerous

additives; duty sufficient to pay the costs inflicted on society.

P J STEWART
Oxford

Sir: How we gasped when Tony Blair gave Frank Field governmental blessing to “think the unthinkable” on welfare reform. The hard fact is that we simply cannot afford to continue with the present system – this is a forced move. For “unthinkable” read “no one prepared to say so in public until it's too late”.

How long before the “unthinkable” means legalising currently banned drugs, which will surely happen, because you can't criminalise the vast and growing numbers of people who regularly take them and neither can we afford the rising cost of prohibition?

The rational, civilised thing to do now is to set up a Royal Commission to investigate the matter – let's have some “unthinkable” thinking now, while we still have some options.

ROBIN PRIOR
Ealing, Middlesex

Choice of service

Sir: Margot Thompson, of the Prayer Book Society, is not correct when she says that families have a legal right to “stipulate” the form of service to be used at baptisms, marriages and funerals (Letters, 8 August). It is one thing to have a legal right to express a preference, quite another to be able to insist.

Canon B3 (4) is quite clear that

the decision as to which form of service is to be used lies with the minister who is to conduct the service. It goes on to provide that where the parties cannot agree the bishop shall decide.

In practice this is a matter of concern to a very small group. The vast majority of those I meet for baptism, wedding or funeral are thoroughly “unchurched” when it comes to liturgy. Talk of the Book of Common Prayer or the Alternative Service Book is gobbledegook to them. What does help is talking about the content of the service for the particular occasion. In that I do not see myself as dealing with “customers” but entering into a pastoral relationship. This starts where they are and seeks to relate the gospel to it and move us on a little further in our journey of faith.

The Rev IAN BLACK
Faversham, Kent

Parking for men

Sir: On 29 July you printed an item about women's difficulties with parking and manoeuvring a car.

Having driven my own car for 30 years I am certain the reason is the design of cars to fit men. Women, about six inches shorter, have to make do, balancing on foam cushions and still unable to see the four corners of the car. Lately someone invented for the Golf a seat with a hand-operated raiser. This is an immense improvement. If this can be extended to all cars I am sure women would manoeuvre as well as men. There is nothing so helpful as to be able to see what you are doing.

P G LAING
Ipswich

Children need their freedom

Sir: Thank God I didn't have a mother like Ariella Lister (“Children need our attention”, Letters, 11 August).

As children, my four brothers and sisters and I spent a good deal of our time ensuring we escaped the attention of our parents. There were games that our parents wouldn't have approved of, such as “Knock-Down Ginger” and “Let's get lost”, or lying around doing nothing except watching the passers-by.

We spent our days in a haze of sunshine, tree-climbing, scrumping, and make-believe. We did unaccountable things that children like doing, such as counting the number of paving stones in the street, or imagining that every third person who came into view was a murderer and trailing him home. None, I'm sure, would be considered valuable by Ms Lister.

We did our own exploring and extended our own horizons. Our parents never intruded upon this private world. Mother was where we needed her at the end of a long day – at home.

Ms Lister would do her children a favour if she remembered that she was the parent and not the kid, and gave them the freedom of a bit of healthy neglect.

IANE O'MAHONEY
Launceston, Cornwall

Race pitfalls in Mozart

Sir: The problems Fritz Spiegl suggests black companies may have with classical texts are not merely theoretical (Letters, 12 August).

When I played the trumpet in a performance of *The Magic Flute* in Port of Spain in 1979, all references to Monostatos's blackness were cut from the dialogue. Since virtually all the singers were black, to have left them in would have appeared paradoxical at least.

However, it has since become a widespread custom to cut not only Sarastro's condemnatory line in the second act, “Your soul is as black as your face!”, which would understandably give offence, but also the comic line in the first: “Since we already have black birds in the world, why shouldn't there be black men?”, which is meant to show Papageno's innocence.

In the performances given at Snape Maltings last weekend, directed by Benjamin Luxon, these lines were, unusually, retained, although the tenor singing Monostatos wore token black make-up. Perhaps it was felt that people were less likely to be offended, since the performance was in German.

IVAN MOSELEY
London W4

Ultimate apology

Sir: I have come to feel the descendants of the pre-Celtic people of the so-called British Isles are owed an apology (Letters, 11, 12 August) from the Celtic invaders of our islands.

Perhaps a joint apology could be formulated by the leaders of the nationalist parties of Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales? It might be a reminder that instead of whingeing on about how we were done down in ancestral times, we should be trying to learn lessons from the past to help us all to live together in the present.

PHILIP COOK
Westbury, Wiltshire

Photograph:
Hulton Getty/
Apple

process. Lord Curzon predicted that with the loss of the Indian Empire, Britain would drop "straight away to a third-rate power." The loss was probably a bigger shock to the national psyche than we ever acknowledged. Perhaps it was this shock that prompted a new generation's reappraisal of the subcontinent we had ruled for so long. But it turned out to be a shallow, fleshy, trivial return to the subject, a magpie's return. The result is that we probably know and care less about India today, despite the two million people of subcontinental descent now living in Britain, than we did when our imperialist ancestors did a century ago.

tor six or seven a side, and the two acknowledged best footballers – guys who could run with the gazelles and kick like broncos – took it in turns to pick the teams, starting with the most athletic and ending, as always, with Skinny. Skinny loved soccer, but could not play it; the repeated rejection making him ever less confident and able.

Gentle reader, I was Skinny. Nora, Anoushka – I know how you feel.

Miles Kington is on holiday.

Don't look for an e-number on your envelope of coke

I bought a packet of wine gums yesterday and found that the label listed a string of ingredients ranging from glucose syrup and modified starch through to two different glazing agents (vegetable oil and carnauba wax) and three colours (E129, E122 and E142) – the only thing they didn't seem to have in them was any wine. A colleague's pack of Silk Cut Ultra, by contrast, merely gave the formal health warnings and the fact that they had 1mg tar and 0.1mg nicotine. And I gather that when you buy cocaine it merely comes in a little twist of paper, with no country of origin, no E-numbers, no quality grading, in fact no information at all.

So the information given is in inverse proportion to the dangers involved to the user. We don't need to know the E-numbers on the wine gums or even that they are best eaten before the end of April 1998. It is helpful to know the tar and nicotine levels in cigarettes, though if you buy them duty-free you don't even get that. And apparently it would be enormously helpful to have more information about the quality of coke, because there has been a serious decline in quality in recent years – a former customer explained to me that he had given up because the quality in London had become so bad.

Why this strange inversion of information? The answer is obvious. Wine gums are food and are closely regulated, with suppliers required to give ludicrous amounts of information.

Tobacco exists in a twilight world, still legal but increasingly discouraged, while it is not closely regulated in the way food is, suppliers are being forced to make the product less attractive. And the drug industries, because they exist outside the law, have no controls or regulations on them at all – the advantage of being illegal is they do what they like. The law is an ass.

Every time some sad event occurs which is associated with drugs, such as the shooting of five-year-old Dillon Hull, the debate reopens as to whether drug use should be decriminalised. The arguments are by now well-known. Hardly anyone is in favour of encouraging drug use, but the two sides differ as to the most effective way of curbing it. Advocates of decriminalising drugs point out that the law has not only failed to curb drug use, but has created enormous profits for criminals, who go around shooting people, and offers no protection to users. Opponents argue that the laws against drugs should be more strongly enforced and that weakening them would merely encourage more use.

It might seem a perfectly legitimate debate, but to say that ignores one thing. There will be no change in the law. There can be no change because any significant weakening in the laws against drugs, as Tony Blair recognises, would be seen as a signal that society was less concerned about their use. The Government cannot be seen to be soft on drugs. That was why calls this week by Labour MPs for a review of drug legislation were so quickly slapped down by Minister 10.

Yet the present situation, where perhaps one-third of teenagers regularly break the law by taking drugs, is intolerable. So what gives? When some activity is damaging society, but cannot be stopped by legislation, what happens?



Hamish McRae

Because they exist outside the law, drugs have no controls on them. As with booze and fags, only social pressures will curb use

better deals on pensions because they will be less likely to collect them. Now apply this experience to drugs. As any economist knows there are two sides to economic activity: supply and demand. Present (ineffective) legislation focuses largely on supply. Social pressures can focus (much more effectively) on demand, just as they have in the case of booze and fags.

These pressures will show through in a host of different forms. For example, drug-testing may become a more regular condition of employment, as it has in America. Insurance policies could have a "drug clause", with higher premiums for anyone with a conviction. The information revolution will probably help. Expect information about the costs of drug use to become more widely available, not through government-sponsored ad campaigns but through the exchange of information on the Internet (or its successor). The aim would be to make drug use unfashionable. That would not solve drug use by people outside the mainstream. But cut overall use (and the profits from that) and the problem becomes more manageable.

No legal changes at all? Well, maybe at some stage it will be possible to fine-tune the law so that it pushes hard against the really dreadful aspects of the drug trade, but casts a blinder eye toward the less damaging. A rather better distinction between hard and soft drugs would obviously be helpful. But do not expect the law to be at the frontier: legal change lags behind societal change, it does not lead it.

So do not expect, even in another generation or two, detailed disclosure of contents and quality (complete with E-numbers) on the envelopes of coke. But maybe expect some indication of quality and origin on the packets of hash.

There are at least two historical examples of just such an impasse, and the outcome gives some clues.

The first is alcohol. In the UK in the 18th century the crisis over booze was probably more serious than our one over drugs. Contemporaries chronicled the catastrophe of children neglected by alcoholic parents. Hogarth portrayed the misery of "gin alley", consumption per head was at least four times the present level. Yet it was completely impractical to legislate against it.

Instead society began to lean against excessive drinking. Beer was promoted as the healthy alternative to gin. Temperance movements sprang up. Excessive drinking gradually began to be frowned upon, rather than admired. A long, slow decline in alcohol consumption ensued.

The other model is tobacco. As with booze, it is impossible to outlaw it, but its use carries serious social costs. Here, again, society is leaning against it in a variety of ways: the curbs on advertising and on smoking in public places, the labelling encouraging lower tar brands, the law against children buying cigarettes and so on.

Expect these pressures to continue, partly by more legislation which chips away at the fringes, but more by a mixture of social and financial sanctions. For example, expect the insurance costs for drivers with convictions for drunken driving to soar even further, expect it to become more expensive for smokers to get life assurance – though they will tend to get better deals on pensions because they will be less likely to collect them.

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Too much history is a dangerous thing

by Rupert Cornwell

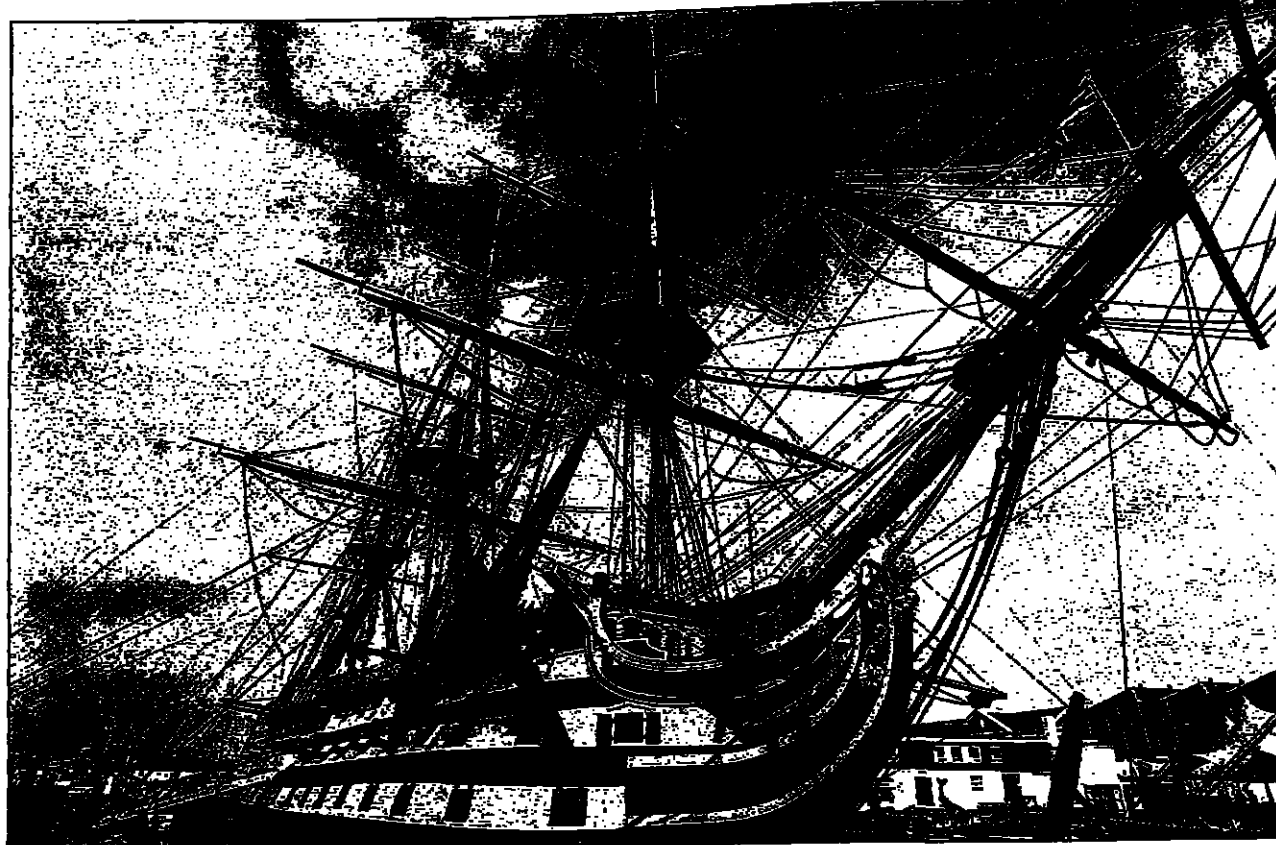
It sounds a glimpse of heaven for all parents trying to keep the kids quiet and themselves sane as the school holiday marathon drags on through the dog days, with the finish line still weeks away. A spanking new museum, interactive and with all the high-tech trimmings, setting out the 2,000-year history of Britain in its uplifting and multifaceted splendour. It would be educational, fun – who knows, maybe even free – and, needless to say, just the sort of thing to capture a nation's re-found self-belief on the eve of the millennium.

Alas, heaven will have to wait at least a little, and perhaps for ever. The idea belonged to a consortium of the great and good, led by the recently ennobled Kenneth Baker, the former Conservative Cabinet minister, for a £110m Museum of British History in central London, to be realised as part of the millennium celebrations. But the Commission turned it down, saying the project was not sufficiently "unique" to warrant the requested £50m of funding from lottery profits. Undeterred, Lord Baker is casting around for alternatives. But for the moment the avenues look closed. And perhaps it is just as well.

For the question must be asked, does Britain need any more history? At school a pupil may be able to drop history when he or she turns 14 (an opportunity, Lord Baker pointedly notes, offered otherwise only by Albania in Europe). Outside in the real world however, you drown in the stuff. We have museums by the thousand; their standards of presentation may sometimes be debatable, but not their contents. What country has so lovingly fostered its links with the past, from blue plaques on houses to restored ships, and entire urban districts and country landscapes preserved in aspic? Indeed, are we not told *ad infinitum* that Britain's problems, from the monarchy downwards, stem from our refusal to let go of the past?

Despite the denial of lottery money, Lord Baker exudes confidence that the scheme for a glistering state-of-the-art Museum of British History will go ahead. Annual profits of £1.7m are forecast within three years. Luminaries such as the former chancellors, now Lords, Healey and Jenkins, as well as the film director Sir David Putnam, are among its supporters. And if this distinguished company can drum up enough wealthy backers, fine.

But there are surely causes more urgent and more deserving of our attention. The



HMS Victory in Portsmouth: what other country has so lovingly fostered its links with the past? Photo: Brian Harris

ing of the ordinary punter's pound than a small extra attraction in a country which in some respects is already a living European Disneyland. To which Lord Baker retorts that the danger is not that we will die of a surfeit of history, but that we will perish from our ignorance of it. The millennium celebrations, of course,

Newton, from John Maynard Keynes to William Gladstone. Its occupants might include Good Queen Bess and Winston Churchill, passing via Horatio Nelson, the Duke of Wellington, and all the others who built the empire upon which, for roughly one tenth of the millennium that is about to end, the sun never set.

Baker explained on the BBC yesterday. "This small island has much to be proud of... in this century alone we have shaped the modern world."

Even if that assertion is true, others will not see it as an unmitigated boon. History is composed of millions of ordinary men, not merely a few great ones. Its essence is argu-

decide to don a little national sackcloth. Events a couple of years ago in America provide a salutary warning. No country "does" museums better than America, and no museum on earth, surely, is finer than the Smithsonian in Washington DC. But its special exhibition to mark the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima showed the extreme peril of tampering with received historical wisdom.

Even in World War II, the Smithsonian dared suggest, the Japanese were not all bad, and President Truman's decision to use atomic weapons might have been overhasty. The outrage among veterans and the political right was seismic: the exhibit was amended, then truncated and ended early. Such are the rewards of evenhandedness.

Would the Baker museum attempt as much in dealing with British history and its ambiguities? If not, then the entire project risks becoming little more than mouthpiece for a British variant of what the Americans call "exceptionalism", a belief that a country (theirs) is singled out by destiny to be different from (read, better than) all others. That, however, is less history than jingoism, unsuitable at 14 or any age.

If it truly seeks to distinguish itself, the Baker museum must acknowledge that Britain's record is not pristine white

are supposed to be about the future, "but you can't talk just about the future. You can't face the future unless you know where you've come from".

But here, a different problem arises. The future is not in doubt, ran the joke in the old Soviet Union, only the past is uncertain. Except it proved no joke, for nothing contributed more to the demise of Communism than Mikhail Gorbachev's decision to open the sealed vaults of his country's past. By such standards, of course, Britain has little to hide, for all its claims about a Freedom of Information Act. But a full-blown museum of national history would throw up controversy enough.

In the first place, what sort of museum should it be? The Baker preference seems to be for a pantheon, of heroes from William Shakespeare to Isaac

Indirectly indeed, that empire is a prime reason why we find ourselves in this pickle. If the world were on Paris Mean Time or Moscow Mean Time, the millennium frenzy and attendant squalls like the Baker Museum would have passed us by. Alas, however, when the international conference to resolve the matter was held in 1884, Britain was top nation, source of the world's most authoritative shipping maps and navigational charts, boasting possessions in every corner of the globe. Greenwich, home of the Royal Observatory, was the obvious, overwhelming candidate to be the site of the prime meridian.

For the last 113 years, therefore, each new day for the entire world has officially dawned there, the planet's silent, unceasing tribute to Britain's glories. As Lord

ment; one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist. If it truly seeks to distinguish itself, the Baker museum must acknowledge that Britain's record, like that of every other country, is not pristine white but a tapestry of greys. What of slavery, religious persecutions, the underside of the Industrial Revolution, imperial excesses and diplomatic capitulations like Munich? These, though, are not the notes the millennium celebrations are designed to hit.

Or suppose instead we

A thread of faith in the Midlands

An odd phrase popped into my head. I had left behind the dull industrial landscape of South Wales and cut across the country, past the motorway swirl of Birmingham and Coventry, to half-timbered Northamptonshire. In the manicured market town of Wellingborough, as I wandered down the walled lane next to the town's United Reformed Church, loud Indian music suddenly bounded out from the first floor windows of the church hall. "When you meet someone of another faith take off your shoes," I recalled from somewhere, "you are entering on holy ground, for God has been here before you." I went in.

Inside, two and three deep all around the hall, scores of Gujarati women sat in brightly coloured saris – not cheap ones bought in Leicester but heavily embroidered ones of silk and fine lawn obviously brought back from the sub-continent. Some of the younger women wore on their hands and feet elaborate henna drawings of leaves and flowers. In the centre of the floor a dozen people – the immediate family at the centre of the celebration – were dancing in a crocodile of diminishing age.

At their head was Vinu Shthanakia, a wiry man who whirled and twirled with controlled abandon. It was joyful, exuberant, natural dancing but with something mysterious and elegant about it. It was a ritual of initiation, a *vajrapavitra* in which a sacred thread is given to mark the passage of a Brahmin boy from childhood. Originally it marked the departure of a boy to study with a guru but many boys feel that, even in places where ashrams are thin on the ground, the tradition is an important

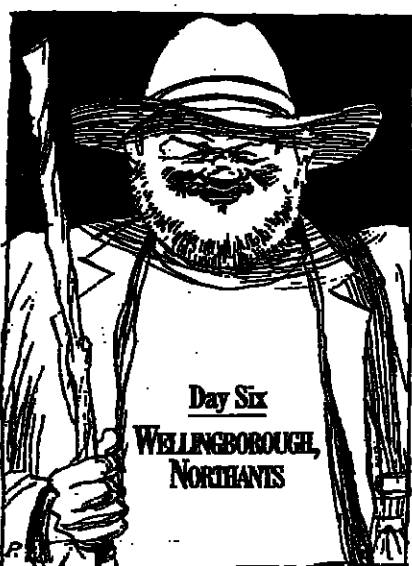
component of their cultural identity. The dance complete, Vinu came across to welcome me, a perfect stranger, to his family celebration. "For some, religion may be about an internal spiritual journey," he said, "but to me it is about keeping people together." He was 42, and had been born in Uganda, where Indian immigrants had kept their traditions alive; it was important now that his son, Sumil, 11, should do the same. Vinu believes he will.

On to the dance floor came a tiny child in a vivid silver and turquoise sari to perform, with snaking hands and immense seriousness, to a loud disco beat. Next came Vinu's eldest daughter with a swaying, gliding dance which seemed to have a story, involving dramatic gestures of rejection and hunting herself on the floor. "That one is traditional," said Vinu's wife's sister's husband, Joshi, a coach driver from Leicester, "but the first one is our version of the Spice Girls – the little girl learnt it from a video."

Joshi does not share Vinu's optimism. "All this will fade away," he said. His children hadn't come. "My daughter is 17. She works part-time in Top Shop on Saturdays and said she was too tired to come. My son, who's 15, wanted to play football."

As the evening progressed the music became an eclectic mix of loud traditional Hindi music, Bangra, and odder stuff – there was even a Bengali cover of World Wide Message Tribe's "Jump in the House of God". The generations combined as readily on the floor. Fuelled only by water and Virgin Cola – Brahmins are supposed to eschew alcohol as well as tobacco and meat – the atmosphere was exhilarated yet affectionate. Teenagers chatted with the grey-

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH PAUL VALLEY

haired matriarchs who remained seated at the edge. Older children played patiently with much younger cousins. There was no sulking or bad behaviour. It seemed a cohesive community. But will it remain so, I wondered, as the web of tradition, language and religion weakens?

Next day came the actual ceremony. It lasted six hours, but again it was more like a party than a formal religious service. On the stage, where the disco had been, a priest was setting up a makeshift altar with a large tapestry of the elephant god Ganesha surrounded by flowers, food, bowls of water and of fire and photographs of dead relatives. Here the rituals were conducted as the 200 guests milled around beneath, chatting and eating.

Few, even of the older generation, comprehend the Sanskrit in which the prayers are made. "I don't understand a lot of all this," said Joshi's daughter, Niana, who had now turned up, with her hair in a bubbly perm above her lime green sari. Her vowels were pure Midlands.

Her generation's world is a hybrid. Her friend Aarti, 19, a classic sultry Indian beauty, wore contact lenses to make her eyes inconspicuously blue. On her forehead was the *chandi*, the mark which traditionally denoted a married woman but which has become a fashion item among the young. They chatted about their cultural vortex. Of parents so strict that the girls are not allowed to talk to boys in the street. Of Asian school-friends who live double lives – demure at home and dangerous on the streets. Of the prominent Brahmin leader who had to resign when his unmarried daughter became pregnant "by an Afro-Caribbean".

Yet they would hope to marry Hindus, if not Brahmins. Aarti wanted to teach her children Gujarati, even though they would not have, as she did, a grandmother who could not speak English. Niana could never eat meat. "Yuk!" And though much of the religion she rejected as superstition – "like saying you can't wash your hair on Wednesdays" – she did wonder about a holy woman whom she had heard was possessed by a goddess.

On the stage young Sumil was holding the sacred thread above his head. Something inflammable was thrown on to the fire with a whoosh. A sheet was placed over the heads of the boy and the priest so that the body man could impart in confidence the Gayatri verses from the Rig-Veda which are the secret mantra the child must now recite every morning. The thread was placed diagonally across the boy's naked torso. "He's a proper Brahmin now," one matriarch muttered to herself. Sumil and his cousin, who had also been subjected to the rite of passage, were carried shoulder-high by their uncles across the room to the beat of a drum. The entire family milled around, bowing to touch the feet of their elders to obtain blessing. The women gave short, ritualised embraces. The mothers and grandmothers cried, as they do at such occasions in all cultures.

Then the older women began to sing to the boys – a song to which the middle-aged women seemed not to know the words. Sumil and his cousin received it, looking slightly bewildered, for they are of the modern world which has no place for ritual. Would they be, I wondered, the last generation to hear it?

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Headline inflation at two-year high

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Higher mortgage rates, more expensive petrol and alcohol since the Budget and a seasonal rise in the cost of food pushed the headline rate of inflation last month to its highest level for almost two years. Including all those factors, the RPI jumped to 3.3 per cent from 2.9 per cent in June.

The stock market shrugged off the rise, focusing on an unchanged underlying inflation rate, excluding home loans and

indirect taxes, of 2.2 per cent. Despite the highest headline rate since September 1995, when the RPI was 3.9 per cent, the FTSE 100 index of leading shares closed 43.9 points higher at 5075.8.

Economists agreed that the cost of living data justified the Bank of England's recent hint that interest rates were now high enough to contain inflation at its 2.5 per cent target. Despite strong retail sales volumes, the latest figures showed discounting on the high street remained as deep as last year, with con-

sumers demanding lower prices even when they were spending the proceeds of the recent building society windfalls.

On the high street, household goods inflation held steady at 0.9 per cent, while clothing and footwear prices nudged up by only 1.1 per cent. Underlying inflation would actually have fallen had it not been for a jump in seasonal food price inflation which almost certainly reflected recent damage to crops.

The official inflation figures came just before today's quarterly Inflation Report from the

Bank of England, which will be its first assessment of the inflation outlook since it assumed operational independence for setting monetary policy. Previously the Bank advised the Chancellor on interest rates, but he could (and often did) ignore its recommendations.

Now the forecasters and policy-makers are the same people, the report will be raked over with a fine tooth-comb by analysts looking for clues about the likely direction of interest rates. The Government's Paymaster General, Geoffrey Robin-

son, said he expected to see RPI-X, the underlying inflation measure that excludes only mortgage payments, back down within a couple of months as the full effects of the July Budget showed through in the official statistics.

He said: "Next month we will get the benefit of the cut in VAT on fuel. We are confident we will see inflation come down over the next few months, very much in line with the target we have set." Last week the Bank increased interest rates by a quarter point to 7 per cent, the fourth rate rise

in as many months. It has been concerned that a flood of windfall gains from the conversion of mutually owned building societies to banks would put already strong consumer spending over into an inflationary boom.

Jonathan Lynnes, UK economist at HSBC, welcomed the data: "The figures are much better than they look at first sight, with all of the upward pressure coming from mortgages, taxes and the erratic seasonal food component. Underlying inflation pressures remain very subdued with clear signs that lower

costs are feeding through to the high street."

Not everyone was as sanguine. Rosemary Radcliffe, head of economics at Coopers & Lybrand, said she believed the Bank's interest rate "amnesty" might not last long. "Our view is that the Bank will probably need to raise rates further later this year or early next year to control the inflationary pressures now building up."

She predicted a rise in RPI-X from July's 3.0 per cent to 3.4 per cent by the fourth quarter of next year.

Guardian courted over sale of GMTV stake

Cathy Newman

Guardian Media Group (GMC), owner of the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers, is believed to have been approached about selling its stake in GMTV, the breakfast television service.

GMC has been sounded out by other GMTV shareholders about whether it would be prepared to sell its 15 per cent stake in the business, according to City sources.

The appointment of a successor for Jim Markwick, GMC's chief executive, which sources said will be announced next week, could kick-start a shake-up of the group. Mr Markwick's replacement, who is understood to have a background in television and books, may dust down proposals to split the company up.

GMC has in the past considered floating off some of its non-core assets, such as its interests in GMTV and a number of independent production companies, to raise funds for the *Guardian* and *Observer*. The plans were thought to have been shelved at the end of last year, but City sources continue to question the logic of the group's portfolio. The Scott Trust, GMC's parent company, has been conducting a review of the group for many months, and is understood to want to focus resources on the two national newspapers, *Auto Trader* and the *Manchester Evening News*.

GMC is likely to drop its involvement with GMTV in the long term, insiders say. However, it may postpone until the Independent Television Commission decides how much ITV broadcasters should pay to renew their licences. GMTV, which paid £50m to the Treasury last year, is likely to gain financially when it renews its licence, but its exact value would be determined by the size of its licence fee.

GMC's other shareholders are Disney, which has a 25 per cent stake, and Carlton Communications, Scottish Media Group and Granada Group, which each hold 20 per cent. Analysts say Carlton and Granada are keen to increase their holding of GMTV.

Sir Desmond wins stay of execution

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

United Utilities yesterday failed to resolve the future of Sir Desmond Pitcher as executive chairman, but pledged to take "immediate action" to determine his fate after holding an unscheduled board meeting.

The company is expected to reveal the outcome of an internal review into Sir Desmond's position when it announces half yearly results in late November. It will be largely by Derek Green, the replacement for Brian Staples who was recently ousted as chief executive.

Last night big shareholders backed away from calls for Sir Desmond's immediate resignation, but insisted that he would have to leave the group by the end of the year. "The board ignores the shareholders' view at its peril. You can't push water uphill. There are such things as extraordinary general meetings," complained one leading investor.

The board meeting was convened after institutional investors called for Sir Desmond's resignation, following concern over his role in the surprise sacking of Brian Staples last month. Mr Staples was forced to resign after a long-running rift with Sir Desmond, with United saying he had lost the confidence of the board.

Sir Peter Middleton, chairman of BZW and a United non-executive director, held meetings with 10 big investors last week to assess the level of discontent.

He was told shareholders wanted the appointment of a new non-executive chairman by Christmas at the latest, though some apparently called for Sir Desmond to go immediately.

A statement released after yesterday's board meeting said the United directors had heard "reports" on the views of institutional investors from Sir Peter and Jane Newell, another non-executive. Directors then "considered a number of matters arising."

The statement continued: "The board is aware of the succession issues regarding the chairman, Sir Desmond Pitcher, and the chief executive, Derek Green, and is taking immediate action to resolve the position. There will be a further announcement in the autumn."

Like Sir Desmond, Mr Green is due to retire from United in the year 2000, leaving two gaps at the helm to be filled. The group added that the board remained "in full support" of the action to remove Mr Staples and directors backed the statement unanimously.

United said it did not intend to make any further statements until the announcement later this year. "We want to draw a veil over this process to avoid further publicity. We're looking to restore an atmosphere of calm," said a company source.

The board meeting began at United's Mayfair headquarters at 1pm and lasted for about 2 hours. It was attended by five executive directors, excluding

Sir Desmond, and five non-executive directors. Afterwards Sir Desmond and Sir Peter left the building together.

Big investors were disappointed at the lack of information, but welcomed the talk of "immediate action" as a positive move. "We're reasonably happy with the outcome. The company is now working behind the scenes to sort out the succession question and this is clearly a commitment to change things. But we cannot wait longer than the autumn," said one shareholder.

Another added: "I'm inclined to interpret this statement as saying there'll be some positive action. That means the board realised shareholder value would be enhanced by appointing a new, non-executive chairman."

But other shareholders were disappointed at the "lack of clarity" in the statement and questioned how the review would operate. "We're unimpressed by this. What is still outstanding is the question of exactly who runs the company. We know who owns it but we don't know who runs it. We won't stop the pressure," said another investor.

According to one source close to United the succession debate would widen beyond Mr Green's existing operational investigation, which was launched after Mr Staples' departure. It was unclear last night whether Sir Desmond would remain chairman of the board committee responsible for new appointments, or pass the job to Sir Peter.



Sir Desmond Pitcher emerging from yesterday's board meeting with Sir Peter Middleton in the background

"The succession issue will be conducted by the board jointly and severally," said the source. The next scheduled board meeting is not till the end of next month.

Analysts predicted the dis-

cussions would now focus on the exact retirement date for Sir Desmond. "He may push to stay on till next July's annual general meeting, or until the spring. What's clear though is that he will now go before 2000, pass-

ing responsibility for finding a new chief executive to a replacement non-executive chairman," one analyst explained.

Sir Desmond is likely to receive a pay-off worth more than £600,000. He has a two

year rolling contract, with a basic salary last year of £310,000.

It also emerged yesterday that Sir Peter has ruled himself out of the job of replacement non-executive chairman, despite speculation last week.

Rival supplier offers to cut water bills in half

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Owfat, the water watchdog, will hear today of the most ambitious plan yet to achieve genuine water competition, with an application to take over supplies for a £1bn "new town" development in north Kent.

The proposals, drawn up by the London-based consultancy group Enviro-Logic, would take over supplies to the Kings Hill development from its existing supplier, Mid Kent Water. Enviro-Logic, supported by the site's developer, Rouse Kent, will argue it can cut bills by at least 5 per cent above inflation each year, with potential savings of up to 50 per cent. It compared with the existing price formula which pegs bills to the retail price index.

The formal application will intensify pressure on Owfat to approve other moves towards competition, four years after serious discussions first began with Enviro-Logic. So far Owfat is considering 21 so-called "inset" applications, where a new operator takes over water or sewerage services from the incumbent company at wholesale rates agreed with the regulator.

The Kings Hill plans envisage creating a new water company which would buy bulk supplies of drinking water from Mid Kent Water and become responsible for installing new infrastructure as the development expanded.

So far 500 houses have been built on the former Second World War fighter base, with plans for a further 850. The development also includes office space for more than 10,000 workers, a hotel and a business school for the University of Greenwich.

The most innovative idea is to use recycled waste water, known as "grey water", for lavatories and watering gardens. Another plan is to capture rainwater supplies on the site and to arrange discounts for households to

buy washing machines and dishwashers which used less water. Enviro-Logic would also aim to reduce leakage rates to zero.

David Easson, managing director of Rouse Kent, said the grey-water scheme would set an example for other developments. "We spend a lot of money greening the place up with trees and open spaces, but it all looks very tired by the end of the summer. We could do much more irrigation if we didn't have to use expensive drinking water."

Enviro-Logic's managing director, Jeremy Bryan, said the scheme would avoid having to take further scarce water resources from other parts of Mid Kent's area. "This would be a step change for the industry. It would show that the status quo isn't worth defending."

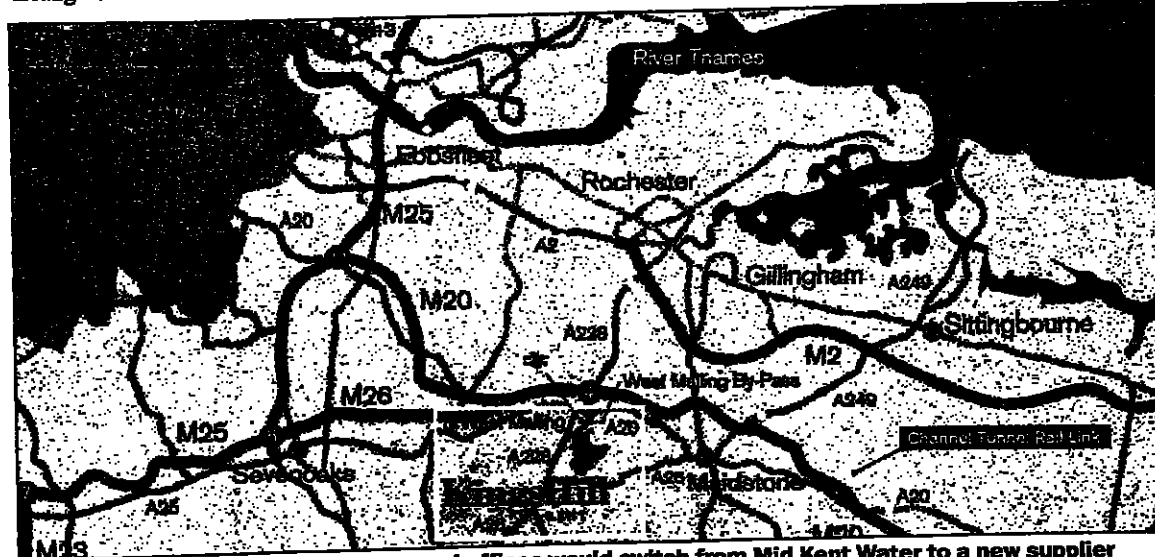
Geoff Baldwin, Mid Kent's chief executive, said he had not seen detailed projections from Enviro-Logic. "We'll have to wait and see before we make any response, but I'm not

quite sure how they can do it. We looked at a grey-water scheme for Kings Hill and it didn't stack up in terms of cost outlay."

Though Owfat has spent years considering inset appointments, mostly from large industrial users such as brewers, it has so far approved just one scheme. Anglian Water has recently taken over supplies for a Buxted chicken plant in Suffolk from Essex and Suffolk Water, one of the smaller drinking water companies. However, the change is limited, since site is already in Anglian's sewerage area.

Concern over Owfat's commitment to competition, enshrined in the 1991 Water Industry Act, has risen since the recent departure of Carole Bagent as head of competition. Speaking last week Ian Byatt, the regulator, said he wanted to replace Ms Bagent "as soon as possible", but could not say whether any other applications would be approved.

Mr Byatt said his preferred method of competition was for companies to seek new sources of water, including exploiting the rising water table in cities including Greater London. "This is potential competition rather than actual competition. They are acting as a water broker," Mr Byatt said. He admitted Owfat was taking longer to resolve Enviro-Logic's inset applications than he would have liked, but blamed the delay on the need to get further information.



Kings Hill, north Kent, where homes and offices would switch from Mid Kent Water to a new supplier

Premier League blocks Man Utd TV game plan

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Manchester United, the UK's best-supported and most successful football club, has been forced to delay plans to screen its home matches at neighbouring Bury after failing to secure permission from the Premier League. The decision means United's opening home league game against Southampton tonight will not be screened at Bury's Gigg Lane ground.

United had hoped to screen its first five home matches at the nearby First Division club's ground in order to offer around 7,000 fans alternative access to watch games which typically attract sell-out 55,000 crowds at Old Trafford. But Premier League officials turned down the request due to concerns about the potential impact on attendances at other local clubs such as Blackburn Rovers, Burnley and Oldham Athletic.

The Premier League has not ruled out the plan and it is understood that it may be resurrected by the end of the month. Negotiations between the Premier League and the Nationwide Football League are taking place about the issue. United issued a statement saying the plans had been postponed for "licensing reasons" but "restoration of the proposal is being kept closely under review". The Premier League confirmed the matter was still under consideration.

It is understood that United had problems securing permission from the local authority to screen home games at Bury due to the additional policing that would be required.

United said it was disappointed with the decision and Bury would be the biggest loser as the additional funds generated by the games would

have been useful for the club which has just been promoted to the First Division.

Ticket prices had been set to start at £5. Manchester United shares shrugged off the disappointment, closing 2p higher at 653.5p.

Separately Celtic, the AIM-listed Scottish football club, announced a pre-tax profit, excluding transfer fees, of £5.2m in the year to June. The club said it would reinvest the profits principally in new signings in a bid to stop Rangers winning a record 10th Scottish League title in a row. The figures compared with a loss of £1m in the previous year. Turnover also improved from £16m to £22m.

Analysts said they remained positive on Celtic's potential. Nick Batram, of Greig Middleton, said "a number of its revenue streams such as merchandise are well below where they should be for a club of Celtic's size". He also said the club should be able to fill its Park Head stadium when the capacity is increased to 60,000.

Celtic chairman Fergus McCann hit out at the quality and structure of the Scottish domestic game and its limited market. The Scottish Premier League clubs recently appointed Deloitte & Touche to look at the commerciality of the Scottish clubs. International Management Group has been appointed to look at the value of the television deals to the clubs. The current deal runs out at the end of this season.

Celtic is not paying a dividend. Mr Batram said: "There are so many opportunities at the moment to reinvest the cash that they are generating into the business that they see the returns of investing that cash rather than paying dividends going to serve shareholders better."

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100

Dow Jones*

Nikkei

FTSE World Index

*New Jones Index at graph at 1200 hours

Indices						
Index	Close	Day's change	Change(%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5075.80	+43.90	+0.9	5098.80	4058.60	3.26
FTSE 250	4700.40	+26.80	+0.6	4729.40	4359.20	3.63
FTSE 350	2438.00	+19.90	+0.8	2454.00	2017.90	3.31
FTSE Smallcap	2228.83	+10.16	+0.5	2374.20	2178.29	3.21
FTSE All-Share	2376.39	+18.70	+0.8	2376.39	1992.78	3.30
New York *	9049.10	-13.01	-0.2	9269.31	5053.94	1.61
Dax	19095.11	+274.93	+1.5	20881.07	17303.85	0.821
Hong Kong	16383.41	-77.08	-0.5	16673.27	12055.17	2.711
Frankfurt	4363.09	+29.96	+0.7	4438.93	2848.77	1.281

Source: FT Information



COMMENT

Owat has approved only one application to substitute an incumbent supplier - Anglian Water is now supplying a chicken farm in Suffolk which is outside its franchise area

Here's a water scheme that's too good to waste

When they privatised the water industry the Conservatives accepted that installing real competition would be a bit like trying to push the stuff uphill. It is not a commodity that lends itself readily to market forces. For one thing, it is a natural monopoly, for another it is expensive and difficult to transport, as Yorkshire Water demonstrated during its little local difficulties two summers ago.

Instead they hit upon the concept of "comparative competition" - the idea that the most efficient suppliers would set the standard for the rest and so bring down prices for everyone. It never worked, as rising bills, leakage rates and water shortages have shown.

Today, however, Ian Byatt, the industry regulator, has a golden opportunity to prove that where there is a will there is a way. Mr Byatt will be asked to approve a scheme that will allow nearly 2,000 homes and businesses on the Kings Mill development near Maidstone to get their water not from the local monopoly, Mid Kent Water, but from Envirologie, a rival supplier.

Envirologie is promising all sorts of goodies such as zero leakage rates, a way of saving on consumption by flushing the toilet with "grey water" (don't ask) and, best of all, at least 5 per cent and perhaps as much as 50 per cent off the bills that householders in nearby Tonbridge pay. Even Mid Kent does not lose out since the water for Kings Mill will be bought from it at a commercial

price which reflects the incumbent supplier's own cost base.

This is not the first application that Mr Byatt has received from Envirologie. It has 25 other schemes in the pipeline all still awaiting the go-ahead, none has yet been given the Ofwat seal of approval. It is not alone. Since the necessary legislation was passed five years ago Ofwat has approved only one application to substitute an incumbent supplier - Anglian Water is now supplying a chicken farm in Suffolk which is outside its franchise area.

The snag is that Mr Byatt does not really like this form of competition as a means of delivering better service and value to consumers. In fact, he doesn't even regard it as proper competition but sees it merely as water brokering. Instead Ofwat is working on its grand price review which promises to deliver one-off reductions in bills in 2000. In itself this is fine (even though history shows that regulators invariably underestimate the amount that privatised utilities can afford to hand back).

In the meantime he only seems interested in competition that results from rival suppliers actually developing their own water resources. In an industry where the word "drought" never seems far from anyone's lips, this is more easily said than done. In the case of Mid Kent, where the only way to tap new water sources is to dig another reservoir, it is a non-starter.

But, as Kings Mill shows, there is an

answer. What better way of achieving keener prices and greater efficiency from incumbent suppliers than offering one set of customers 50 per cent off their bills?

Sir Des wins a victory of sorts

Ahem. We, the undersigned, being of sound mind and body and in no way intimidated by the executive chairman, wish to make the following statement: Sir Desmond Pitcher will continue to run United Utilities until such time as he, sorry we, see fit. It is a decision for us, the board, not you, the shareholders. In this, we are "wholly unanimous", in case you missed the point.

Its casual butchery of the English language aside, the statement that emanated from yesterday's "unscheduled" meeting of the United Utilities board was designed to buy time.

Sir Desmond should have been given his marching orders yesterday. Instead the uncertainty will linger on until the autumn since the outcome of the boardroom bust-up that has kept us so entertained this summer will not be known until the interims in November.

Perhaps it was too much to expect the non-executives to take their courage in their hands and lance this particular boil by telling Sir Desmond to stand down. Perhaps they realised they would be made to look

silly, having backed Sir Desmond just three weeks ago when he ousted his only serious rival, Brian Staples. Perhaps they calculated that to lose an executive chairman so soon after parting company with a chief executive would leave them exposed to a more serious accusation than mere carelessness.

The subtext of yesterday's statement is that the concerns of institutional shareholders have been heard and that results will be forthcoming.

Sir Desmond, the institutions presume, will still go. But it will be according to his timetable, not a knee-jerk response to institutional bloodlust.

Sir Desmond has proved himself a doughty fighter in the past. Yesterday a combination of his own cunning and the pusillanimous performance of his non-executives gave him a victory of sorts again.

But unless this autumn's review comes up with an early departure date for Sir Desmond, the institutions must act. While they are at it, they might reinforce the ranks of the non-execs as well.

Outlook for rates is driving the market

Inflation rose to its highest level for two years yesterday. It was also flat and possibly lower too, depending on what you choose to exclude from the calculation. That's the beauty of having so many measures of

the cost of living - there's grist for everyone's mill in these figures.

Despite the rise in both the headline rate of inflation and RPI-X, the measure that excludes home loans and which most people focus on when interest rates are rising, yesterday's data actually offered some reassurance that inflation is pretty subdued.

Stripping out higher taxes on booze and petrol and the damage caused to crops by the recent heavy rain, the rise in the cost of what's left was unchanged at a fairly harmless 2.2 per cent. On the high street, shoppers are driving a pretty hard bargain, even with the windfalls they got for free. That provides some hope that the Bank of England was right last week when it attempted to talk the pound down by hinting that interest rates were now consistent with its 2.5 per cent inflation target. Of course, the trouble with monetary policy is that you don't know for a year or so, by which time it's too late.

Attention will now shift to sifting the entrails of the Bank of England's quarterly report on inflation later today which ought to be a landmark, the Old Lady's first assessment of the outlook for prices since it was set free to determine monetary policy. Although, last week's unusual hint to the markets has pre-empted the report to some extent, the market is hyper-sensitive to any statement from the Bank and, in the absence of any corporate news, it is the outlook for rates that is driving the market through this quiet holiday season.

Overseas earnings and exports hit by the pound as potential victims take action to ensure damage limitation

Strong sterling takes further toll of UK companies

Clifford German

BOC, the gas supplier, Glynwed, the engineer, Sedgwick, the insurance broker and Smith & Nephew, the international healthcare group have joined the growing army of UK companies to announce results which have been severely hit by the strong pound.

Smith & Nephew reported a 12 per cent drop in half year profits to £81.1m but it would have made another £11m but for the adverse effects of a strong pound on overseas earnings and on UK exports. If sterling stays strong it will cost another £11m in the second half of the year.

Glynwed pushed up profits by £3.7m to £43.9m in the six months to the end of June, but the strength of sterling cost it another £4m in lost profit on overseas earnings and UK exports.

BOC said the strong pound

had cost it more than £33m in the nine months to June. Sales and profits were up 5 per cent at constant exchange rates. However, due to the surge in sterling, turnover was down 3 per cent to £2.71bn and profits down 1 per cent to £325.4m.

The pound reduced profits from abroad by £26m when translated into sterling, including a £22m effect on the industrial gas division which sells 95 per cent of its output in local currencies around the world. In addition to this translation effect, the transaction costs of profits lost because of exchange rate changes was £13m.

The adverse impact of the strong pound is partly offset by the benefits of borrowing 90 per cent of the debt finance overseas, which reduces the adverse impact of translation costs by £6m. But in a full year the finance director Tony Isaacs said the translation costs of sterling will reduce profits by

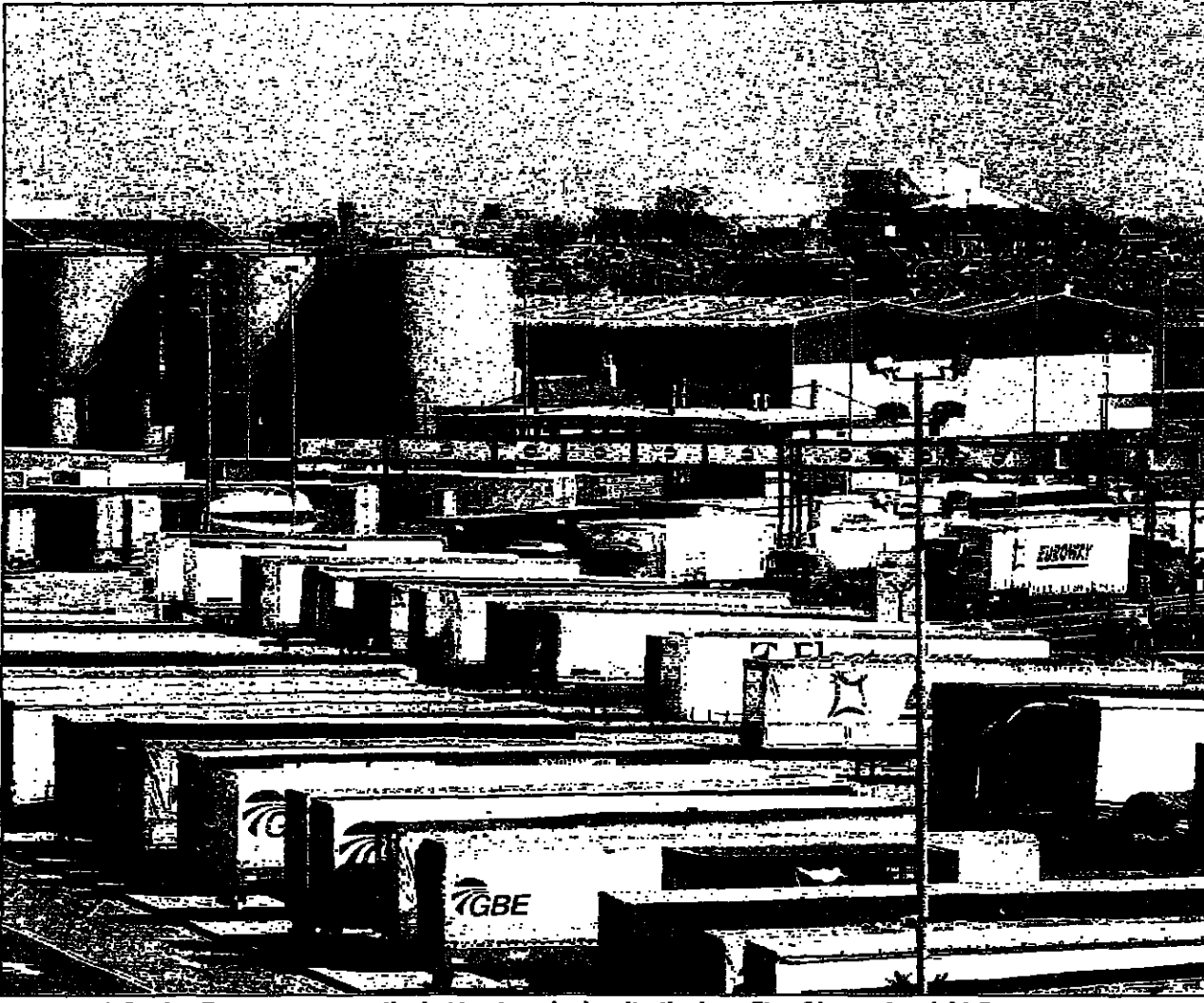
£36m before interest costs and £28m after interest costs, while the transaction costs will grow to £19m.

It was the same story at the insurance brokers Sedgwick Group. The company claimed a 16 per cent increase in profits to £66.5m at the half-year stage in constant exchange rates, but the strength of sterling cost it £7m, half of it on translation the rest on transactions, and the actual increase in sterling terms was less than 4 per cent. That cost will rise to £8.5m in a full year if the pound stays strong.

Sedgwick confirmed it would consider mergers or takeovers following a wave of consolidation amongst insurance brokers.

Analysts believe its rival Willis Corroon would be the most suitable candidate but the company has consistently said it wants to retain its independence.

Investment column, page 18



Portsmouth Docks: Exporters are continuing to struggle despite the benefits of borrowing debt finance overseas

A short-term fix to offset the impact of a volatile currency

The pound has fallen back about 5 per cent in the last 10 days since the Bank of England sent a signal that UK interest rates were now high enough to control inflation. The slide has come as a welcome relief to hard-pressed exporters who faced a serious struggle to compete if sterling remained at its recent high.

The impact of sustained strength could have been significant, costing companies between £12bn and £15bn in lost profits, it has been estimated. That would wipe out most if not all their expected profit gains this year, according to Douglas McWilliams, chief executive of the Centre for Economics and Business Research.

But currency analysts do not expect the relief to be permanent. UK interest rates are on average 2 per cent more than in the US, 4 per cent more than in Germany, and the UK economy still looks strong. With continuing economic growth

and low inflation, sterling assets are an attractive home for foreigners' money.

Currency analysts who last month were predicting the pound would climb as high as 3.30 German marks, have revised their forecasts downwards, but many of them still expect to see DM3.15 early next year.

Economies have learned to live with strong currencies in the past, but it is a new experience for the UK and it could take two or three years and many redundancies before UK companies can achieve the extra productivity gains needed to offset sterling at its current levels.

In the meantime they must rely on hedging, the only short-term way to offset the adverse effects of a strong pound. Even that, however, is not a universal panacea for all companies. Those based in the UK but with overseas earnings suffer a translation effect when they convert them into sterling for accounting purposes, and translation

Until firms adjust to life under strong pound they will have to rely on hedging, writes Clifford German

losses are almost impossible to protect against.

The real benefit is for exporters, who suffer an extra transaction cost in the form of profit lost on export sales. These companies can offset some of the risks by hedging their commitments. This can take the form of selling the foreign currencies they expect to earn in future on the forward foreign exchange market, or by taking out a sterling call option on the options market, where specialist traders will tailor individual packages to meet the precise needs of the company.

On average over 90 per cent of all hedging deals and 80 per cent by value are done on the forward market, according to Nigel Rankin, head of the department at BZW that advises corporate customers. Selling currencies forward fixes the

amount of sterling the exporter eventually receives, and rates are currently more favourable than spot rates.

But the contract has to be financed, the currency has to be delivered and if the pound weakens again before the sterling is due for delivery a forward contract can result in a loss.

Some of the biggest hedging deals of all are done on the options market, especially when currencies are fluctuating and rates could go either way. In such cases the exporter buys an option to convert set amounts in foreign currencies into sterling, normally at the current rate of exchange, say DM2.95 to the pound.

If the pound continues to strengthen to say DM3.20 by the time the exporter gets paid, he exercises the option and gets his money at DM2.95. If the pound

falls back to say DM2.75 the option lapses and the exporter gets the benefit of getting the extra pounds in the normal way.

But nothing is for free, and buying an option incurs a fee rather like an insurance premium. The size of the fee varies with supply and demand, but a one-year option to sell marks for pounds at today's exchange rate currently costs about 4 per cent of the amount hedged. It can be cheaper if the exporter buys an option to trade at a less favourable rate, just as a motor insurance premium is cheaper if the driver pays the first slice of any claim.

Many big companies hedge about two thirds of their exposure to currency changes on their export earnings. But John Rennocks, the finance director of British Steel, made it crystal clear last week that there is no

such thing as a permanent hedge against currency fluctuations.

Most hedges are designed to cover companies for around 12 months, and are often tailored to cover the company's financial year. Hedge transactions taken out before sterling began its spectacular rise a year ago have partially protected profits in the past 12 months, but many of those contracts have now expired, to be replaced by new ones at current, less favourable rates of exchange, and the impact of a strong pound on profits is likely to get worse before it gets better.

If sterling now stabilises around current levels some of the pain will disappear when next year's profits are compared with this, but the impact on competitiveness and remitted profits will remain. It is extremely difficult to make long-term business plans against the background of the currency

volatility which we have seen in the past year.

According to Mr Rennocks: "Hedging is an important part of any exporter's business activity, but it can only defer the impact of violent currency swings. What all exporters need is a stable exchange rate environment founded on a sensibly valued pound, not a wildly overvalued one."

It is, of course, possible that just as things look darkest, sterling will fall away as fast as it has risen and it will be exporters rather than exporters whose profits suffer. There is no doubt that if EMU were abandoned or postponed in an orderly fashion the German mark would look much more attractive because the Bundesbank could then maintain its traditional commitment to holding down inflation in Germany without having to support traditionally more inflation-prone economies like Spain and Italy. But business cannot hold its breath.

Deals at top legal firm hit £5.9m

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Linklaters & Paines consolidated its position in the first half of the year as the most successful law firm advising on UK public takeovers. The firm worked on 18 deals worth a total of £5.9m, coming top of the lawyers' mergers and acquisitions league table as it did for the whole of 1996.

Deals the firm advised on included the takeover of East Midlands Electricity by Dominion Resources of the US. It also acted for Chubb Security when it was taken over by Williams Holdings for £1.3bn.

Although Linklaters' position was unchallenged at the top of the pile in the six months to June, others jumped up the table. Ashurst Morris Crisp, fourth last year, was in second place with 11 deals worth £5.46bn. Clifford Chance rose from ninth to third position after advising on six deals worth £4.35bn.

Ashurst Morris advised on the half year's biggest public deal, the £1.5bn acquisition by American Electric Power for its long-time client, Yorkshire Electricity. Its rise, from 13th position at the end of 1995, pushed out former high-flyers Slaughter & May and Freshfields to fourth and fifth place respectively.

The publication by *Acquisitions Monthly* of the legal league table coincided with figures from the Office for National Statistics showing a decline in the amount spent by overseas companies acquiring British companies in the second quarter compared to the first three months of the year.

Acquisitions by overseas companies of British businesses as during the second quarter included the £350m takeover of recruitment consultant Michael Page by Interim Services. That deal and the purchase of Yorkshire Electricity accounted for more than two-thirds of the inward takeover total of £2.7bn.

Spending overseas by British companies was led by Tomkins' £249m acquisition of Stant Corporation and the £238m purchase of Sinter Metals by GKN. The two largest domestic transactions were the acquisition of Howden by Charter for £378m and the merger of Bardon and Camas to form Aggregate Industries for £295m.

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S&N remains comparatively dull

It's hard to knock Smith & Nephew. The healthcare company has excellent product ranges, good geographical diversity and fine margins, typically at almost 18 per cent. If this were an engineering company or a food producer, such vital statistics would look comely. Unfortunately, Smith & Nephew is usually compared to pharmaceutical stocks like Zeneca which achieve earnings growth averaging 15 per cent and margins in the heavy 30s. Compared to this, S&N's 5 per cent sales growth ex-currency and 3 per cent underlying profit growth in the half year to June is pedestrian and explains why it has been a worthy, but dull investment.

There are factors that could potentially get S&N's share price going. One, already under way, is a shift from competitive low-margin medical devices and bandages to more innovative and quasi-pharmaceutical products. S&N is spending around £35m a year on research and development to stay ahead of the competition. In the half year, orthopaedic implants were boosted by a new generation of knees and endoscopes by some novel keyhole surgery devices.

These sorts of products should allow S&N to demand higher prices in the key US market, though pricing pressure is easing there. The big hope, though, is Dermagraft - artificial skin in a bag which speeds up healing of diabetic leg ulcers. The product, costing a hefty £6m this year to launch, will hit the UK in October and could be approved in the US by early 1998. Chris O'Donnell, S&N's new chief executive, expects Dermagraft to make a small loss next year, but hopes for sales of £150m by 2001. Some analysts think it could double that.

The problem is persuading healthcare groups to pay a hefty \$3,000 for a course of treatment. In Europe, a third of the world market, fixed budgets could make acceptance of this product difficult. Preparation for monetary union is freezing healthcare spending, flattening S&N's continental European sales this half. The competition also looks worrying, particularly Novartis's Apilgraff.

What would undoubtedly help S&N's shares is an acquisition. Mr O'Donnell has talked about a wish list, including Roche's orthopaedic business. But though S&N could borrow around £500m, anything bigger would involve equity. With a host of groups hunting for good healthcare acquisitions, it would have to pay through the nose for anything interesting. Of course, S&N itself could be a big target, though that has been talked about for years and never materialised. Given all that and the currency problem - a £2m hit in the half year - it's hard to see what will galvanise S&N's shares in the short term.

Lehman Brothers are forecasting £160m pre-tax profits for the full year rising to £199m in 1999. The shares, up 1p to 175.5p are on a forward price

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

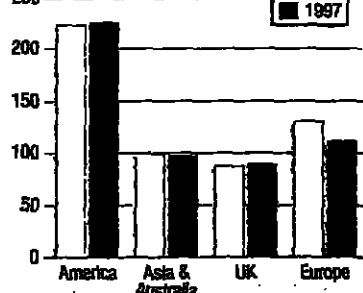
Smith & Nephew: At a glance

Market value: £1.94bn, share price 175p (+1p)

Trading record	1994	1995	1996	1996	1997
		Full year		Half year	
Turnover (£m)	995	1026	1089	540	525
Pre-tax profits (£m)	(5.5)	177	179	91.9	81.1
Earnings per share (p)	(4.96)	10.29	10.92	5.68	5.42
Dividends per share (p)	5.28	5.55	6.00	2.29	2.40

Headline growth

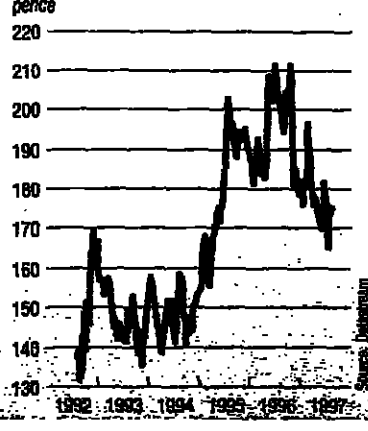
Sales (£m)



Growth excluding currency

+7% +10% +4% Flat

Share price



of 16.4 times this year falling to 14 times in 1999. Fair.

General Accident is top of the class

General Accident, the last of the four composite insurance groups to report interim figures, lived up to its reputation yesterday as the best of the bunch. Operating profits of £260m, the most sensible measure struck between investment gains, compared favourably with last year's £193m and brokers' expectations.

Of the four, General Accident was the only company to actually make a profit from its UK underwriting. Not only did it end the half in the black, but it managed an increase in profits from £11m to £19m, despite a marked deterioration in insurance rates during the period.

It has done that by getting the basics right, pricing premiums in order to make a profit and not worrying unduly if that means a fall in volumes. Premium income fell slightly in sterling terms and only rose 4 per cent in original currencies.

Elsewhere, underwriting discipline is less in evidence but in the key US market, General Accident's second-largest territory, there was a dramatic improvement from an £80m loss to one of only £48m. The full impact of a cost-reduction programme is yet to show through, so the improvement should continue.

General Accident was the first composite to restructure its business after the insurance industry's dark days at the end of the 1980s and it has remained an innovator. It was the first to pull out of insuring so-called hot hatches such as the Golf GTi and in 1992 it withdrew from the competitive commercial car fleet market.

In life assurance, a growing proportion of the whole, General Accident is benefiting from the integration of last year's acquisition, Provident Mutual. That appears to have been a good deal, struck before prices in the sector really took off this year.

So General Accident is top of the class in performance terms - sadly it is also out in front on most valuation measures. At 947.5p, up 2.5p yesterday, the shares stand at a chunky 21 per cent premium to net assets per share of 784p. That is more than its

peers and a dividend yield of 4 per cent, on a forecast full-year payout of 37.7p, also makes it at least as pricey as the rest of the sector. It is the price for quality, however, and the shares are well underpinned at their current level.

New chief should help Glynwed

Glynwed, the engineering group best known for its Aga cookers, has had a torrid time of late. For more than a year its shares have been plunging, forced down by a combination of the strong pound's impact on exports, the market's lack of enthusiasm for engineering stocks and the City's reservations about the group's management.

In the year to July, the shares underperformed the market by 50 per cent and though they have enjoyed a limited bounce recently they are still on a puny rating. The question now is whether the poor run will continue or whether the shares have been oversold.

There were some grounds for encouragement yesterday, though not all the issues have been addressed to the market's liking. Pre-tax profits for the six months to 26 June were 9 per cent higher at £44m, though the strong pound knocked £4m from the total and is predicted to make a £10m dent in the full-year numbers.

As for the management structure, Bruce Ralph, the chief executive who has attracted some criticism, is stepping down next year. His replacement, finance director Tony Wilson, is well regarded but hardly a new broom as he has been with Glynwed for more than 20 years.

Investors have been frustrated by the pace of change in business mix but Mr Wilson was promising more action yesterday. The loss-making Wednesbury Tube business has been sold, as have several smaller operations.

The company is talking about further disposals and acquisitions of up to £100m concentrating in the US catering equipment market. These are more likely to be funded by debt than equity, though if the price recovers the company is not ruling out a share issue.

Though profits in the consumer and construction divisions fell by £1m in the first half due to margin pressure on construction products, trading was better in July and the windfall factor should boost sales of Agas and Rayburn range cookers, which retail at £8,000 and £5,000 respectively.

On forecasts of £90m for the current year and £100m the next the shares, down 10.5p to 341.5p, trade on a forward rating of 10 falling to 9.

At these levels the shares are starting to look a decent bet. Either the current management will sort out the problems, or someone else will do it for them.

Alpha moves towards an international image

Alpha Airports Group, the company that runs duty-free shops and purveys in-flight grub, has appointed Kevin Abbott as its chief executive following the recent surprise departure of his predecessor, Paul Harrison, to Standard Chartered.

Does this mean that Mohamed Al Fayed, who bought a 25 per cent stake in Alpha last November, is finally making his plans for the company public?

Far from it. According to Alpha's chairman, Rodney Galpin, the Egyptian-born Harrods boss wasn't consulted on Mr Abbott's appointment. Mr Fayed, father of Dodi, isn't even on the Alpha board.

Alpha is having to plan for the time next year when both Heathrow and Gatwick will draw their licences for the company to run their duty-free shops, says Mr Galpin.

"Balanced against that we've got a new contract in Sri Lanka. We picked Mr Abbott because of his international marketing experience - our retail business is going to have to become far more international."

So why not link up with Mr Fayed? He's already got 10 UK airport outlets under the Signature brand which would have synergies with Alpha's 80 shops.

And another thing. Was Mr Galpin, formerly a chairman of Standard Chartered, responsible for helping Mr Harrison get his own job at that bank?

The urban former Bank of England mandarin laughs: "I can assure you it was pure coincidence. I was as surprised as anyone."

John Ross resigned unexpectedly as chief executive of Charles Sidney, the Bradford-based car dealer and Mercedes specialist, on Monday night in what the company described ominously as "an amicable agreement".

It seems his partnership with the chairman, Raymond Edwards, spanning the four years since they floated Charles Sidney off from Albert Fisher, had come to the end of its course.

A spokesman for Charles Sidney said: "There was just not room for a full-time chairman and chief executive."

Mr Edwards takes over Mr Ross's role, while non-executive director John Mather in turn succeeds Mr Edwards as non-executive chairman.

There is no word of what Mr Ross plans to do next. He was educated at London University, once worked for British Leyland and Mercedes Benz and joined Charles Sidney in 1981. He rose to become managing director in 1986 and then chief executive two years ago.

Something certainly needs to be done at the company. Its shares have disappointed since it came to the market in 1993 at 100p a share - they now stand at 66.5p.

Congratulations to Denise Lewis on her new job as head of press relations at Orange. Ms Lewis was the last of the "gang of three" press spokespeople who were tipped for the top PR job at Cable & Wireless Communications, the company formed by the merger of three cable companies and Mercury last year.

Ms Lewis was from Bell CableMedia, while her opposite number at Cable & Wireless,

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Mohamed Al Fayed: Was not consulted on Kevin Abbott's appointment

Esther Kaposi, has returned to the freelance PR circuit. The other failed competitor for the top slot, former Nynex spokesman Alan Saunders, also left the company. The trio are understood to have trussed hefty pay-offs, the lucky thing.

The man who did get the top spokesman job, Ray Paine, thought he was going to be working for Ruth Blakemore. But she then resigned unexpectedly, so he ended up reporting directly to Graham Wallace, chief executive of CWC.

Two tales reach me which suggest that Richard Branson still has a long way to go in turning around Virgin Trains, his company which took over Cross Country Trains and West Coast Trains.

Last Monday a colleague took one of Mr Branson's trains to Manchester. It was delayed for two-and-a-half hours because "the battery was flat".

And last Thursday another acquaintance took a train from London to Birmingham on which the service was so awful that when the train pulled in there were Virgin staff waiting on the concourse with complaint and compensation forms.

A Virgin Trains spokeswoman acknowledges the problems the new company faces, chiefly 25-year-old rolling stock which is nearing the end of its life, plus infrastructure suffering from decades of under-investment.

All of which makes me wonder: Is this why Mr Branson is withdrawing his own image from his advertising?

Personally, I think he should relax. It was, after all, Mussolini who promised to "make the trains run on time".

John Willcock

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Order early and also receive a FREE Epson Stylus colour inkjet printer. Call direct or visit one of our 34 nationwide retail showrooms now. At just £999 + VAT and 2 years INTEREST FREE CREDIT, when you buy the PLUS model, this surely is the best MMX™ home PC deal in the UK.

0% Interest Free Credit Example

On a purchase of £1,173.83 (inc. VAT) with a 2 year interest free credit period, you will pay £0.00 per month for the first 24 months, then £49.74 per month for the next 24 months, then £99.48 per month for the next 24 months, then £149.22 per month for the next 24 months, then £198.96 per month for the next 24 months, then £248.70 per month for the next 24 months, then £298.44 per month for the next 24 months, then £348.18 per month for the next 24 months, then £397.92 per month for the next 24 months, then £447.66 per month for the next 24 months, then £497.40 per month for the next 24 months, then £547.14 per month for the next 24 months, then £596.88 per month for the next 24 months, then £646.62 per month for the next 24 months, then £696.36 per month for the next 24 months, then £746.10 per month for the next 24 months, then £795.84 per month for the next 24 months, then £845.58 per month for the next 24 months, then £895.32 per month for the next 24 months, then £945.06 per month for the next 24 months, then £994.80 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,044.54 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,094.28 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,144.02 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,193.76 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,243.50 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,293.24 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,342.98 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,392.72 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,442.46 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,492.20 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,541.94 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,591.68 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,641.42 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,691.16 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,740.90 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,790.64 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,840.38 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,890.12 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,939.86 per month for the next 24 months, then £1,989.60 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,039.34 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,089.08 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,138.82 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,188.56 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,238.30 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,288.04 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,337.78 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,387.52 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,437.26 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,487.00 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,536.74 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,586.48 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,636.22 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,685.96 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,735.70 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,785.44 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,835.18 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,884.92 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,934.66 per month for the next 24 months, then £2,984.40 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,034.14 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,083.88 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,133.62 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,183.36 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,233.10 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,282.84 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,332.58 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,382.32 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,432.06 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,481.80 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,531.54 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,581.28 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,631.02 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,680.76 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,730.50 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,780.24 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,829.98 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,879.72 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,929.46 per month for the next 24 months, then £3,979.20 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,028.94 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,078.68 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,128.42 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,178.16 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,227.90 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,277.64 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,327.38 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,377.12 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,426.86 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,476.60 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,526.34 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,576.08 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,625.82 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,675.56 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,725.30 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,775.04 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,824.78 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,874.52 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,924.26 per month for the next 24 months, then £4,974.00 per month for the next 24 months, then £5,023.74 per month 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£15,100.22 per month for the next 24 months, then

unit trusts

Foreign Exchange Rates

FOREIGN EXCHANGE			DOLLAR			S/Spot
Country	Spot	1 month 3 months	Spot	1 month 3 months	Spot	
US	1.5780	10-18 59.95	1.8802	30-31 69.88	0.5360	
Canada	2.1998	71-66 59-55	1.8802	30-31 117.116	1.0000	
Germany	2.2886	59-50 57-57	1.6730	116-115 353.340	3.2175	
France	9.9102	300-300 560-580	1.6730	116-115 45-50	12-15	
Japan	288.1	12-14 15-17	1.1055	52-51 02.2504	0.5094	
Italy	1.694	100-100 367-362	1.1055	52-51 46-47		
ECU	1.883	10-14 50-50	1.1055	52-51 22.9224	20.6450	
Belgium	1.193	21-25 59-51	36.41	14-15 306.355	1.1325	
Netherlands	3.3118	103-104 59-59	2.0890	43-42 16-16	0.1750	
Sweden	1.193	340-350 59-59	2.0890	43-42 439.419	44.2631	
Australia	1.193	340-350 59-59	1.5737	81-81 439.419	4.3004	
New Zealand	1.193	340-350 59-59	1.5737	81-81 398.279	4.3004	
South Africa	1.193	340-350 59-59	8.0039	54-53 19-19	0.7273	
India	340.04	310-310 340-338	1.2646	75 15-15	1.1325	
Indonesia	2.1998	116-116 59-59	1.6527	50 25-25	0.7273	
Switzerland	2.4073	110-105 59-59	7.7440	50-50 125-145	1.1325	
Spain	1.694	110-110 59-59	2.7783	50-50 31-31	1.2138	
Australia*	2.1979	18-2 103-48	1.5955	79 19-19	0.8105	
Hong Kong	1.2222	34-1 102-143	3.7950	66 19-19		
South Africa	1.3481	34-1 102-143	1.5955	79 19-19		
New Zealand	2.4725	37-33 120-116	1.5955	79 19-19		
South Africa	2.1918	37-33 120-116	1.5955	79 19-19		
New Zealand	2.3625	48-44 153-141				

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Tourist Rates

C Rupee	A Rupee	E Rupee	
Australia (Dollars)	20.1875	France (Francs)	9.8400
Canada (Dollars)	29.2500	Germany (Mark)	2.8800
Denmark (Krone)	52.2500	Greece (Dracmas)	420.3500
Belgium (Francs)	29.2500	Hong Kong (Dollars)	11.8800
Canada (Dollars)	0.8750	India (Rupees)	1.0725
Ceylon (Rupees)	10.9825	Italy (Lira)	2004.0000
Dominican (Pesos)	3.2175	Japan (Yen)	180.0000
Malaysia (Dollars)	8.6500	South Africa (Rand)	0.6210
		United States (Dollars)	2.4200
		New Zealand (Dollars)	1.8000
		Portugal (Escudos)	119.1300
		Spain (Pesetas)	204.7500
		Sweden (Kronor)	12.3900
		Switzerland (Francs)	2.2300
		Taiwan (New Dollars)	248.0000
		United Kingdom (Pounds)	1.5600

UK Base	7.50%	Germany Discount	2.50%	US Prime	8.50%	Japan Discount	0.50%
France	3.10%	London	4.50%	Prime Discount	5.00%	Belgium	2.00%
Intervention	3.10%	Canada	4.75%	Fed Funds	5.50%	Denmark	3.00%
Italy	6.25%	Prime Discount	2.98%	Spain	5.25%	Switzerland	1.50%
Daily		Denmark Discount	3.25%	10-Day Repo		Sweden	1.00%
Netherlands	3.00%			Repo (Ave)	4.10%	Lombard	1.00%
Australia							

Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %	Country	5 yr	Yield %	10 yr	yield %
UK	7.50%	7.01	7.25%	7.03	Netherlands	8.25%	4.72	7.75%	5.80
US	6.85%	6.16	6.52%	6.31	Belgium	7.90%	5.32	7.35%	5.25
Japan	5.55%	5.31	2.90%	5.27	Italy	9.25%	4.25	8.75%	5.75
Australia	6.25%	5.21	2.75%	5.19	Bulgaria	3.00%	4.82	6.25%	5.74
Germany	6.00%	4.98	6.00%	5.65	Sweden	13.00%	5.57	6.00%	5.57
France	4.75%	4.72	5.50%	5.24	ECU GAT	6.00%	5.10	5.50%	5.39

Source: NBBB Markets Research

Yields calculated on total basis. — Denotes new bonds

	Overnight	7 Day	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year
Interbank	6 1/4	6 1/4	7 1/2	7 1/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Starting CDs	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 3/4	6 3/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Local Authority Caps	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 3/4	6 3/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Discount Market Deps	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 3/4	6 3/4	7 1/4	7 1/4
Treasury Bills (30y)	-	-	5 3/4	6 1/4	6 5/8	6 7/8
Govt CDs	-	-	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4	6 1/4
ECU Linked Dep	-	-	6 1/4	-	-	-

Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est. Com. traded
Long Call (Sep 97)	114.24	114.29	114.29
German Gov Bd (Sep 97)	136.20	136.38	136.60
Japan Gov Bd (Sep 97)	129.58	129.51	129.51
3 Mth German (Dec 97)	92.36	92.79	92.75
3 Mth Eurodollar (Dec 97)	95.55	95.60	95.64
3 Mth Eurodollar (Dec 97)	95.55	95.53	95.47
3 Mth Eurodollar (Dec 97)	95.55	95.23	95.20
3 Mth Eurodollar (Dec 97)	95.53	95.53	95.50
3 Mth Euroyen (Sep 97)	98.35	98.46	98.35
3 Mth Euroyen (Sep 97)	98.35	98.46	98.35
3 Mth Euroyen (Sep 97)	98.35	98.38	98.32
3 Mth Euroyen (Sep 97)	98.35	98.36	98.36
3 Mth Euroyen (Sep 97)	95.57	95.52	95.56
FTSE 100 (Sep 97)	5115.00	5153.00	5139.00
FTSE 100 (Sep 97)	4745.00	4740.00	4715.00

Settlement price: 5076	closing offer price				Call Total
Series	5000	5050	5100	5150	
Aug	105/9	65/19	33/40	14/75	
Sep	185/74	157/84	129/117	102/142	
Oct	237/106	207/126	178/147	149/170	
Nov	279/129	248/149	218/170	189/193	110

Commodities				
INDUSTRIAL METALS - London				
S/nixe		Cash	3 months	Volume
Aluminum Al	1725-18.0		112616	621200
Aluminum Alloy	1740-18.0		1135-20.0	1139
Copper	227.0-41.0		4398	25400
Lead	382.50-3.50	591.00-40.0	3940	115075
Nickel	960.00-60	6738-40.0	2974	52255
Zinc	1620.0-51.0	1650.0-41.0	4659	11330
			1774	326550
Settlement Commission	88	30m	1774	
	1000	1000	11643	
LIKE Stocks				
				+
				3000
				100
				36
				100
				1430
Steel volume & charges tonnes as at June 12				

PRECIOUS METALS									
126	per 100	\$	£	Coins	\$	£			
127		237.00	275.95	Estimate	353	224	Kruggerand	324/529	
411		430.00	142.25	Palestine 100 cc	194	123	Soviet		
412		443.15	275.85	Palestine 50 cc	99	55	Mexican	429/444	
117		243.15	275.85	Palestine 10 cc	38	24	Maple Leaf	329/332	
118		406.15	236.49						Source See
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*May 1-3, 2009 previous day. Year ago prices are averages for last week. SOURCE: Data-CompuLink. All figures in U.S. dollars.						
COMMODITY INDICES						
	"08 Index	Base date	'09 spot	%/Day Chg	Dec '07	%/Year Chg
"08 Index	1876=100	1994=43	+0.12	215.28	-3.88	1983.53
Grain	1986=100	1994=43	+0.27	291.39	+1.35	2063.34
Energy	1962=100	1971=70	+0.89	95.90	+17.58	100.59
Industrial Metals	1977=100	107.70	-0.85	188.79	+13.27	182.02
Soft Commodities	1977=100	1983.10	-0.55	191.05	-1.14	200.14
Precious Metals	1973=100	428.55	+0.66	463.54	-7.38	494.45

Source: Goldman, Sachs & Co. "S&C" is a trademark and service mark of Goldman, Sachs & Co.

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formerly 'bid'
Non SIB recognised funds

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Cape offers hope for Manton

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Racing Correspondent

It is said that Barry Hills was so transfixed by Manton that he visited the neighbouring town of Marlborough just twice, and that he got his hair cut. It could be that the current incumbent at the Wiltshire training complex has not had to leave the premises at all this season, as Peter Chapple-Hyam has enjoyed the sort of campaign that makes men pull their own hair out.

Chapple-Hyam started the year with the best horse, Revocue, who led the juvenile category of the international classifications. Three defeats on the colt remains on the ramp of the repair shop and an immovable injury suggests he may never be the same again.

Revocue has not been before us since the worst run of his life in the Irish 2,000 Guineas in May. Chapple-Hyam remains vague about when the dual Grass One winner will reappear. "We can't say anything definite about his next target be-

cause we have to take it week by week and day by day with the horse," the trainer said yesterday. "He's been sick and ever since Ireland he keeps going slightly lame. It will be one of those things that's going to drag on, but we know what to do now and we just have to hide our time and hope."

"It's a worry because the season is getting on a bit and it's also very frustrating, particularly as the milers this year don't seem the greatest bunch."

"He has never been the easiest horse in the yard to train and he is lazy on the gallops that he would make you look like Dayjur. He's shocking. He frightens me to death and I think we're up against it to get him to the Moulton. The race I really want for him is the OEJL. We might have to throw him straight into that."

"I could definitely get him ready first time but I'd have to take him to Newbury a few times for a gallop. He needs sharpeners and plenty of them. We will get him back."

Chapple-Hyam was appointed as Manton's trainer by Robert

Sangster on Christmas Eve, 1990, and there were two rather pleasant stocking-filler in his first intake in the shape of Rodrigo de Triano and Dr Devixus. Revocue apart, there is another contemporary beast at the yard who is considered fit to share the same sentence as those pioneers.

Cape Verdi was sent to Roy-

Richard Edmondson
NAP: Sudoro
(Hamilton 6.30)
NB: Tart
(Salisbury 4.45)

al Ascot's Chesham Stakes after a facile Newmarket success, with the margin of victory rather than victory itself the main pre-occupation among her connections. They probably still reply the video and expect the filly to overtake Paul Cole's Central Park. "It was a big shock at Ascot because we thought it was just a case of canter down and canter back," Chapple-Hyam added. "The seven furlongs and the softish ground was slightly against us that day."

More favourable conditions

of six furlongs on a firmer surface will be available when Cape Verdi returns to the track next Thursday for the Lowther Stakes at York's Ebor meeting. If she falls there, friends will not allow Chapple-Hyam near sharp implements or cliffs.

"Next week hinges on Cape Verdi and she is in very good form," the trainer said. "She's top class and there is no way I've given up on her. Every time I see her I get more excited."

There is excitement, too, in the weighing room during the lead up to York as jockeys wait to discover if with a couple of spare rides on any of Mark Johnston's horses. The Middleham trainer routinely employs Jason Weaver for the Kingsley House service, but he will be suspended over next week's meeting.

Johnston is another waiting for an old hero to return to the racecourse, and if Bijou d'Inde, who was brought down in the Dubai World Cup and has consequently been suffering from a tendon injury, is on parade for the International Stakes, he will be ridden by Darryl Holland. "I

don't know what other runners we will have at the moment but I will choose from the jockeys who normally ride for us. Darryl, Brett Doyle, Michael Roberts, and Michael and Richard Hills," Johnston said.

Omitted from the squad is Olivier Peslier, who rode Johnston's Fly To The Stars to success in both the Britannia Handicap at Royal Ascot and Goodwood's Golden Mile. The French champion jockey finished second on the same horse yesterday in the Listed Prix de Tourville at Deauville, a race won by Freddie Head on Mourah. He outstayed them, as his name suggested he would.

Victory over Peslier proved a fitting finale for the six-times former French champion. Head, 50, later announced his retirement, ending a career that brought him over 2,500 winners worldwide.

He named Three Troikas, on whom he won the Arc, and Miesque the 1987 1,000 Guineas winner, as among the best horses he had ridden. He added: "You have got to go some time and it's a big advantage to go when you are still in one piece."

Kelleyway sells up at Shalfleet

Paul Kelleyway yesterday sold his Shalfleet Stable to Jeremy Noseda, and is pondering his future. "I don't know what I am going to do yet," he said. "I have two daughters training and a son who

wants to train. I have a couple of options open to me. The opportunity arose to sell the yard so I had to take it."

Kelleyway, whose fortunes have declined this year, has

only a dozen horses in his care. Noseda, who helped Sheikh Mohammed set up his Godolphin operation, has trained in Los Angeles since 1995.

Wyer pays for his faux pas

Lorcan Wyer was banned for 10 days by the Southwell stewards yesterday for riding a finisher in a circuit too soon on The Tossler in the Stegness Handicap Chase.

Wyer returned to boots and abuse from punters after his faux

pas on the second favourite in the four-runner race. He put his mount in front before the finish line - seemingly not realising there was still a circuit to go.

He was suspended from 23 August to 4 September.

SALISBURY

HYPERION
1.45 Social Charter 2.15 Dancer 2.45 Meilker 3.15 Ops Pettie (nb) 3.45 Francesca's Folly 4.15 Dark Mooncard 4.45 Savu Sea

GOING: Good to Firm.
STALLS: Straight - for sale; 1m 11 - for sale; 1m 11 - for sale.
DRAW ADVANTAGE: High numbers, best up to 71.
Right-hand course, mainly uphill and testing.
Course is 1m 11m of very soft, 1m 11m of Salisbury station (London, Waterloo-Epsom line). 3m. Best service to course. ADDITION: Mumps 2.15; Tattersall's 3.15; Meilker 3.45; Ops Pettie 4.15; Dark Mooncard 4.45; Savu Sea 4.75.

WINNERS IN LAST SEVEN DAYS: None.

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£4,500 added 2YO 6f

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3.30 FAIR DEAL 4.00 Perfect Peach 4.30 Moulded Oscar 5.00 Campeggio

GOING: Good to Firm.

STALLS: Straight - for sale; 1m 11 - for sale; 1m 11 - for sale.

DRAW ADVANTAGE: High for 71 and 72.

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sport

Faldo determined to improve Ballesteros' options

As he sits at home in Pedreña, following the 79th USPGA Championship from afar, Europe's Ryder Cup captain, Seve Ballesteros, can allow himself one consolation thought as he tries to make three go into two: at least he is not Tom Kite.

The American skipper must name his two wild-card selections for the match at Valderrama in September next Monday. Ballesteros has until the conclusion of the BMW International in Munich on 31 August to make up his mind. So far, the Spaniard has not revealed his thinking, even to his potential picks.

The three likely candidates for the two spots are Nick Faldo, Jose Maria Olazabal – both of whom are outside the top 10 automatic qualifying places – and Jesper Parnevik, who as a non-member of the European Tour is not included on the points list.

Andy Farrell looks at the problems faced by golf's two Ryder Cup captains who both have difficult choices to make in naming their selections for Valderrama

"This is the position we didn't want to put Seve in," said Faldo, 22nd on the list and who would set a record of 11 Ryder Cup appearances if he plays at Valderrama. "Having done 10 straight, I would not like to miss out," he added.

Faldo's problem is that this is his last counting event. Next week, he plays in the World Series in Ohio and then, while everyone else goes for broke in Munich, he will be hosting his own Faldo Junior Series finals at the Forest of Arden. Faldo, who missed the cut at Augusta and finished 48th at the US Open and 51st at the Open, must be first or second this week to qualify automatically. At the 1984 US Open at Winged Foot, he was 55th.

"If I play well this week it

takes care of itself," he said. "If I don't, I'll have to be a pick. I have had a second, a third and a fourth in Europe and won in Los Angeles this year and I've got 10 Ryder Cups behind me. On paper, my credentials are pretty good."

But the 40-year-old Englishman missed the cut in his last outing and has been fighting a block with his natural fade. "I now have only one game plan," he revealed. "It's refreshing, I'll aim at the spot I'm looking for with a little draw, not with it going right to left."

Faldo added: "I'm sure Seve's got everything under control. But you know he's going to want Ollie." Olazabal, in 12th place, has been helped by the wrist injury to his countryman Miguel Martin, who rates

himself unlikely to be fit to play at Valderrama if he remains in the top 10. In that instance, the 11th man will qualify.

All the top 13 in the list, bar Martin, play here, plus Sam Torrance, in 17th place, with Per-Ulrik Johansson, Thomas Bjorn and Costantino Rocca the men under pressure to retain their top 10 places. Bjorn, the 26-year-old Dane, was not sure of teeing up tomorrow after missing the last two tournaments following an ankle injury caused by jogging.

Parnevik, who has suffered from sinus problems since finishing as runner-up for the second time in the Open at Troon, can only wait patiently. "It's out of my hands," said the Swede who narrowly missed a wild card two years ago. "I'll be

thrilled if I get on the team, but I won't be disappointed if I don't because of my decision to come over here."

"Yes, I would pick myself, but there are a lot of good players who should be on the team but with the system we have might be left out. I'd like it to be like any other team, just pick the 12 who are playing the best when the match comes round."

Ken Schofield, the executive director of the European Tour, has conceded that the world rankings, in some shape or form, will be taken into account next time.

Kite will be hoping Davis Love, 10th on the US list, can maintain his position. Love and Tommy Tolles, ninth, are the men most in danger, although a victory for anyone

down to Scott McCarron in 25th place could see them on to the team. Assuming Love, a member of the last two teams, makes it, Kite will be looking for experience.

Currently, the top 15 on their list can muster only eight Ryder Cup appearances among them. Fred Couples, despite the personal problems which have affected him this year, will be one pick, but the other could be a surprise. Tom Watson, after finishing fourth at the Masters and 10th at the Open, would be the sentimental choice for a fifth appearance. But Watson's putting problems could be exacerbated by matchplay.

Although a rookie, Kite might instead go for David Duval, not in the best of form recently but with a fine match-play record. He was unbeaten in four matches in both the 1991 Walker Cup and last year's President's Cup.

Ryder Cup standings

1 C Montgomerie	842,230.78	1 T Woods	1,185,000
2 D Crane	580,990.35	2 T Lehman	1,016,286
3 J Woodman	508,574.69	3 J Leonard	888,500
4 B Langer (Ger)	504,907.96	4 J Furyk	857,500
5 L Westwood	439,330.17	5 P Mickelson	809,286
6 J O'Meara	366,396.22	6 M O'Meara	801,250
7 P-U Johansson (Swe)	333,710.30	7 S Fane	714,952
8 T Bjorn (Den)	327,011.59	8 S Hoch	688,265
9 M-A Martin (Sp)	324,400.30	9 T Toller	657,185
10 C Rocca (It)	314,555.29	10 D Love	646,625
11 P Harrington	288,870.04	11 J Maggert	578,280
12 J-M Olazabal (Sp)	268,784.06	12 S Jones	549,750
13 P Broadhurst	258,844.68	13 M Bjoerke	503,334
14 N Chapman	242,350.08	14 P Slankovic	470,000
15 J Hensgen (Ger)	242,350.08	15 F Couples	468,040
16 M-Jones	237,609.86	16 T Watson	423,687
17 S Torrance	236,130.21	17 J Wozniak	407,500
18 D Galford	213,232.42	18 M Bradley	378,000
19 P Neale	210,794.32	19 J Cook	378,000
20 R Claydon	198,415.00	20 K Perry	372,500
Selected: 22 N Faldo	190,297.95	21 S Snodgrass	372,500

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Pigott springs surprises at enterprising Sussex

After the winter they had, Sussex might have done the decent thing and kept a nice, low profile this season while they go about rebuilding the club on and off the field. Instead, barely a week passes without some radical new initiative or startling development at Hove.

First, there was the appointment of the Surrey second-team coach, Tony Pigott, as chief executive, followed by the additional portfolio of acting director of cricket. Then they had the audacity to start a Championship game at 1pm, instead of the time-honoured 11am, in an attempt to attract evening spectators. A day-night Axa Life League game is coming up soon, and lately Desmond Haynes was dismissed as coach and Shane Warne approached to be their overseas player next summer.

When Lord MacLaurin unveiled his master plan for the future of the game last week, guess which county was first to criticise (since partially retracted), simultaneously suggesting plans for a new competition in March? And now, in a season when they were supposed to lose to everyone including Durham, they find themselves in the NatWest Trophy semi-final against Warwickshire, two games away from their first honours in 11 years. A potentially momentous week started for Pigott with an interview in his new office at Hove. He gives the impression he still cannot quite believe all that has happened since he and his chairman, Robin Marlar, in the cricketing coup of the decade, wrested control of the club they both used to play for.

An ambitious county has much to play for at Edgbaston today, says Adam Szreter

Pigott, a member of England's one-cap wonder brigade, bowled zippy fast-medium for Sussex for 18 years and his very last game for them was on the losing side in the 1993 NatWest final – against Warwickshire. He would love to make amends for that at Edgbaston today.

"Firstly, we're absolutely delighted to be in the semi-final," he said. "But we're not just going there for a day out, we actually believe we can win. We've been playing as a unit all season; Peter Moores as captain is very enthusiastic, he's got everybody playing for each other and if everyone plays to the best of their ability, I think we've got an excellent chance."

To get this far, Pigott, taking responsibility for the upsets at Lancashire and, in the quarter-finals, Derbyshire, against whom the 22-year-old Rajesh Rao made 158, one of the innings of the season. They achieved their first Championship win last Saturday, at the expense of the champions, Leicestershire, and although they lost heavily to Warwickshire in both the Championship and the Sunday League the week before, Pigott is unperturbed.

"I couldn't give a damn about any of their individuals," he said. "Allan Donald is a high-class opening bowler, but so is Gladstone Small. Bill Athey's a high-class opening batsman, and so's Neil Taylor. We've got good bowlers in Vasebert Drakes and Paul Jarvis. Both sides have got good individuals and it's a question of who's going to be up for it on the day."

Despite the proximity of such a big game, any conversation with Pigott these days has to be concerned as much with the future as the present. His outspoken criticism of the previous regime, particularly over the departure of several leading players, has given Pigott slightly more of a say in the club's future than he originally bargained for. He knows he has to deliver.

"The thing I really felt before I came back here was that nobody was taking any responsibility for things that were happening," he said. "Things were going wrong and nobody was doing anything about it. I will take all that on board."

"We're looking to redevelop the ground so that we've got a business here 365 days a year."

At the moment we play 37 days cricket here and that's all it's used for, which is ludicrous. We rely almost totally on the ECB [England Cricket Board] hand-outs and we've got to try and stand on our own two feet and earn money so that Sussex County Cricket Club could still survive if the ECB didn't give us the money."

"The support we're getting from the other counties is unbelievable. We wanted to change things and we're not just going to sit there and let things happen. We're planning a night game on 27 August and people were saying, 'we'll wait and see somebody else do that and then maybe we'll do it.' Well why? Why not do it yourself? We're going to make a lot of money that night."

"This late start that we tried against Essex, I know one county that said, 'we always wanted to do that but, we wanted somebody to experiment first'. Why? Basically, they just see us trying to move things forward, not only for Sussex but for cricket, because we have got to somehow get people to come and watch this game."

"Nobody expected us to be in this semi-final, and if we won the final at Lord's, what a great story it would be. The further we go in this competition the more support we're going to get, because people believe what has happened here in the last six months is good for cricket."

"That's why we did it in the first place, that's why we'll continue to do it and if we win competitions – which we will do in the future – it can only help us. If we win this one, this year, it'll be just sensational."



Pigott: Taking responsibility

Ranatunga adopts the bold approach

TONY COZIER

reports from Colombo Sri Lanka 332 and 415-7 dec India 375 and 49-0

Sri Lanka's insatiable run-getters Sanath Jayasuriya and Aravinda de Silva piled up yet more records while giving their captain, Arjuna Ranatunga, the satisfaction of a challenging declaration late on the fourth day of the second Test against India here yesterday.

Jayasuriya, the left-handed opener, followed his monumental 340 in the drawn first Test last week with another masterful, chanceless innings of 199 and De Silva, somewhat less assured but no less aggressive, compiled his second hundred of the match and his sixth in successive Test innings this year in

Colombo. The pair added 213, a new overall third-wicket Test record for Sri Lanka, at such a rate that Ranatunga was confident enough to close and leave India with 374 to win off the remaining minimum 103 overs.

The pitch is still basically true but India include at least two high quality batsmen of their own in their captain, Sachin Tendulkar, whose previous two innings in the series have both been three figures, and Mohammad Azharuddin. In other words, it was an enterprising decision by Ranatunga.

As it was, India's openers moved 49 closer to their goal off the final 13 overs of the day so that the equation this morning is 325 off the allotted 90 overs. The prospects are intriguing.

Yet, judging by their diffident approach in the field as Jaya-

suriya and De Silva took control, the jaded Indians appear to lack the heart for a real fight. Once the pair had become settled, the plan was simply to scatter the field in the hope of damage limitation but it did not succeed. The two took runs at liberty and when De Silva offered chances they were unaccepted three times.

Jayasuriya was the first to go, bowled by fast bowler Abey Kuruvilla trying for the single he needed for a double century through a field tightened for one of the few times during the day. In the course of his stay of 226 balls, that included two sixes and 22 fours, Jayasuriya became the first batsman to pass 1,000 Test runs for the year.

De Silva went past his seemingly inevitable hundred – the second time in Tests this year at the Sinhalese Sports Club

ground that he had completed one in each innings – and the declaration came when he lofted a catch to extra cover.

Fourth day: India won toss
SRI LANKA – First innings 332 (P de Silva 165, D Mahipala 78, A Ranatunga 139, S C Ganguly 147, M Muralitharan 4-99).
SRI LANKA – Second innings
Overnight: 77 for 3
S T Jayasuriya b Mahipala 109
S C Ganguly b Mahipala 35
P de Silva c sub b Kuruvilla 120
A Ranatunga run out 12
M Muralitharan 4-99
SRI LANKA – Third innings 415-7 dec
India 375 and 49-0
Overnight: 77 for 3
S T Jayasuriya b Mahipala 109
S C Ganguly b Mahipala 35
P de Silva c sub b Kuruvilla 120
A Ranatunga run out 12
M Muralitharan 4-99
SRI LANKA – Fourth innings 213-0
India 375 and 49-0
Overnight: 77 for 3
S T Jayasuriya b Mahipala 109
S C Ganguly b Mahipala 35
P de Silva c sub b Kuruvilla 120
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SRI LANKA – Eighth innings 213-0
India 3

